# ROCKETEER: The Art of Neal Adams

COMICS scene

# SPECTACULAR

K47269 JULY 1991 #4

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## Rob Liefeld unleashes X-FORCE

ROCKETEER
JUNE 21
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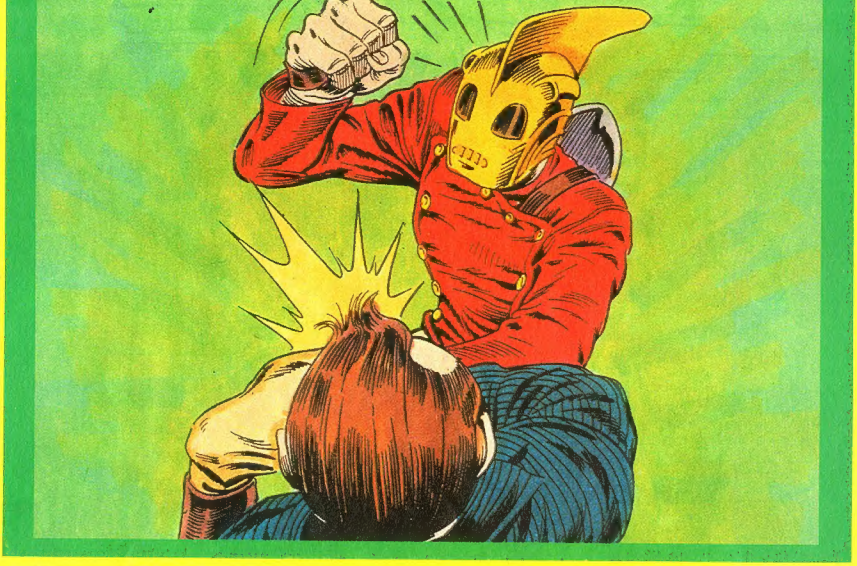

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# COMICS scene® SPECTACULAR

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Without those other kids, Rob Liefeld guides Marvel's newest mutants.
LIEFELD

# NEW MUTANTS NO MORE

By HANK KANALZ

The *last* set of characters I ever thought I would work on were the New Mutants," says Rob Liefeld. "But then, I guess they aren't *the* new mutants anymore."

Indeed, after the artist enjoyed a short and successful run on *The New Mutants*, Marvel canceled that book with issue #100. In its place, Liefeld will plot, pencil *and* ink a new title, *X-Force*. It features essentially the same cast as *The New Mutants* did in its twilight issues, plus an entirely new setting and supporting cast of characters. Fabian Nicieza dialogues the book, leaving Liefeld the responsibility and control of a large cast of characters.

Achieving the status of writer/artist at the early age of 23 took a great deal of hard work, perseverance and focus. Like most artists in the industry, Liefeld always wanted to draw comics. "Once I left high school, I figured out I wouldn't be something worthy, like a doctor or lawyer. Since I always wanted to draw comics, I sought out the opportunities and decided I wanted to make a living at it."

Although he had been drawing for years, Liefeld set aside one year to specifically focus on breaking into the industry. By this time, he had attended a junior college and many art classes. He also studied what readers seemed to like in comics and trends in the field. "I used to name specific people as influences like Frank Miller, John Byrne, George Perez and later Art Adams. These days, I'm influenced by everyone! I do enjoy the work of Todd McFarlane, Erik Larsen, Jim Lee, Whilce Portacio and Paul Smith."

After finally being satisfied with a set of sample pages, Liefeld went to a convention in Northern California. "I showed my samples around, and I received a lot of interest from Marvel. DC actually assigned me work first, but Marvel was the first to show some *real* interest." Following a few short stories for DC, Liefeld's big break came on the hit mini-series *Hawk & Dove*. It was photocopies of samples and *Hawk & Dove* pencils that finally prompted Marvel to assign some work to Liefeld.

"I wasn't sure of my future at DC. At the time, there was light talk of a *Hawk & Dove* series, but no solid plans. Plus, my relationship with the team wasn't what I would call ideal." Liefeld gave sample pages to Fabian Nicieza, who circulated them throughout the Marvel offices. "At first, I was offered some issues of *Daredevil*, but they conflicted with my *Hawk & Dove* schedule. Eventually, the samples found their way into [X-titles editor] Bob Harras' office. He told me that he was looking to make some changes in his X-books." Asked if he was interested in being a part of the change, Liefeld replied, "Most certainly, *yes*!"

"It's funny when you mention that I was a fan favorite at DC. When you jump over to Marvel, and when Marvel creators jump over to DC, no one really recognizes you. Kids are surprised that I actually did work for DC. To many Marvel readers, my first published work is *X-Factor* #40!" Liefeld has been working on Marvel's mutants with editor Harras ever since. "He has shown a lot of faith in me, when others at the time would not."

If Bob Harras wanted changes, Rob Liefeld delivered them. It all started with the creation of the New Mutants' new leader, Cable. "There was a message left on my machine by Bob. He said, 'Create a new teacher of sorts for the Mutants. Give him armor and stuff.' I thought that was cool—I hadn't even received my first plot and I already had something to do. Louise [Simonson] didn't like the character, and I can see why, since it was pushed on her. A little friction between us developed there...I felt her version of Cable was not what he was supposed to be, and it showed." Liefeld pitched some other ideas to the book. Some, like the Mutant Liberation Front which he co-created with Simonson, saw print. Others were shelved. "I basically took the attitude that I would see how well Cable did before giving up any more ideas."

At times, Harras and Liefeld would rework plots over the phone, even though Liefeld was never given co-plotting credit. Simonson eventually left the title, leaving the writer's position open. "Louise felt that it was time to move on," Liefeld says. "At the time, I had quit the book as well. Things weren't going as I had hoped. I was basically drawing a book about a group of whining teenagers. I wanted more than just a change in costumes. When Louise quit, I realized that I had a great opportunity."

So, Liefeld asked Harras for the same chance as any other writer for the position on the book. "I was already planning a trip to New York. We went out to lunch for about four hours. I pitched a storyline that would last a year and result in a whole new team. Marvel was very receptive." A week later, Harras called Liefeld and offered

him *The New Mutants*. "He wanted me to plot, and that was fine by me. I never wanted to be the one who put the words in their mouths."

The new creative team was slated—Rob Liefeld, art and plot; Fabian Nicieza, dialogue. "Fabian is great. He has no input to the story, and that's fine with him. He always tells me he has fun scripting the book, and I think it really shows." Liefeld writes out each plot of *X-Force*, as he did with *New Mutants*, and sends them to Harras. After approval, he does thumbnail sketches of each page and sends copies to Nicieza. "Fabian and I go over everything on the phone, and then he takes my thumbnails and dialogues them."

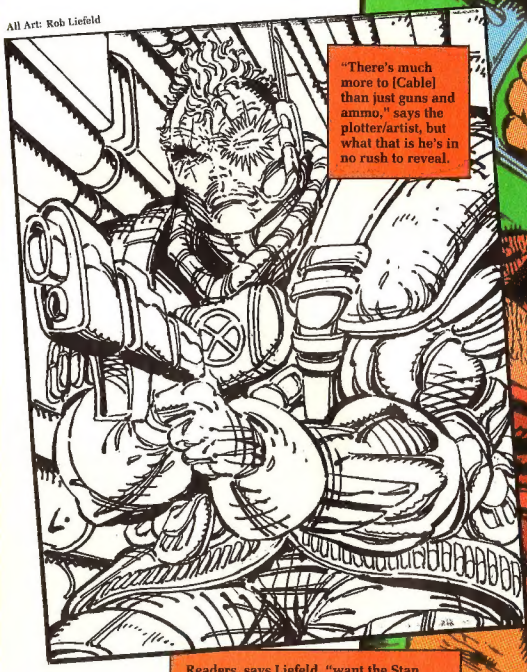
With the 100th issue soon to arrive, Harras wanted to do something special. "I had three issues to clean house. With the way the team was by issue #100, I suggested we change the title with #101." After some careful consideration, everyone agreed to cancel *The New Mutants* with # 100 and start over with a brand new book, *X-Force*, keeping the creative team intact.

By the end of issue #100, Liefeld had tied up most of Simonson's storylines and introduced all the new characters for *X-Force*. "The only real criteria Bob had for me was to get the kids away from Xavier's school. They were no longer his students, and Bob and I really wanted to make a statement—that this was no longer the *same* book," says Liefeld. "The key word for *X-Force* is *new*. New situations, new bad guys, new characters, along with some old stuff."

One of the loose ends Liefeld will gradually tie up involves Cable. "The way Cable appears in the last three issues of *New Mutants* is how he *should* be. He's not the cute and cuddly version Louise scripted," Liefeld explains. He intends on keeping an air of mystery about the character on purpose. "There's much more to this character than just guns and ammo." According to loyal readers, the biggest unsolved mystery is the man appearing to be Cable on the last page of *New Mutants* #100. All Liefeld will confirm is that "it will all be explained slowly in *X-Force*. It's going to be a bumpy ride. Cable's air of mystery will thicken!"

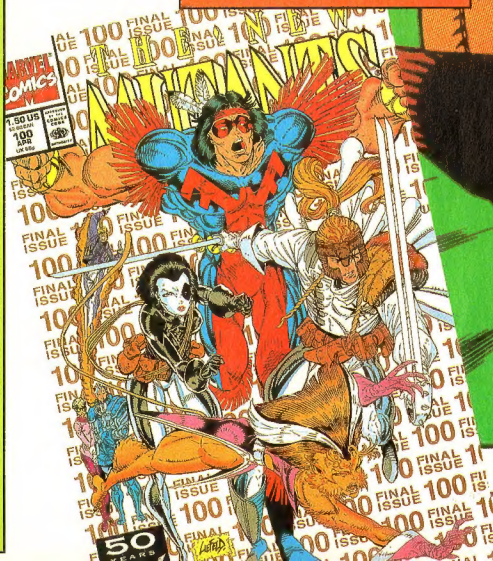
Each of the new heroes brings a new nemesis. Shatterstar will be pursued by the Imperial Protectorate, as he was in *New Mutants*. The Morlocks are gathering and readying an attack on the surface world, as warned by Feral. The destruction of Warpath's reservation will bring X-Force up against the Hellfire Club. Roberto's new role will pit the group against his mentor, Gideon. "Just because a New Mutant is no longer part of the team doesn't

All Art: Rob Liefeld



"There's much more to [Cable] than just guns and ammo," says the plotter/artist, but what that is he's in no rush to reveal.

Readers, says Liefeld, "want the Stan Lee/Jack Kirby formula, real in-your-face action."



Cable's battle with Wolverine wasn't his first with the X-Man or it seems, with any other Marvel hero.

Art: Rob Liefeld/Todd McFarlane

Marvel comic is like a good Steven Spielberg or Joel Silver movie—strong central characters who move throughout the story. And that's why I think these books are so popular."

Refusing to get bored, Liefeld makes things exciting for himself. "I can't see *X-Force* ever getting boring. I have this large cast that I can draw and plot, while guys like McFarlane amaze me because they only have *one* main character they have to draw each and every issue. I try to continually challenge myself." One way he challenges himself is in the design of each page. "To me, pages that excite me have something that draws my eye, what I call an anchor. So, when I design each of my pages, I try to work in an anchor. Some people say I sacrifice storytelling, I don't know, but I do try to make each page visually exciting."

Liefeld hopes that all his excitement for *X-Force* will rub off on readers. "I want to make the characters as good as possible. Hopefully, they'll become as popular as Storm, Wolverine and Nightcrawler did in *The Uncanny X-Men*." Aside from that personal goal, Liefeld has no sense of competition or even contact with the other X-book creators. "I have a friendly relationship with Jim Lee, who I talk to or see at cons once in awhile. Other than that, Bob coordinates things between books. As far as crossovers go, not for the first year because I want *X-Force* to fly on its own."

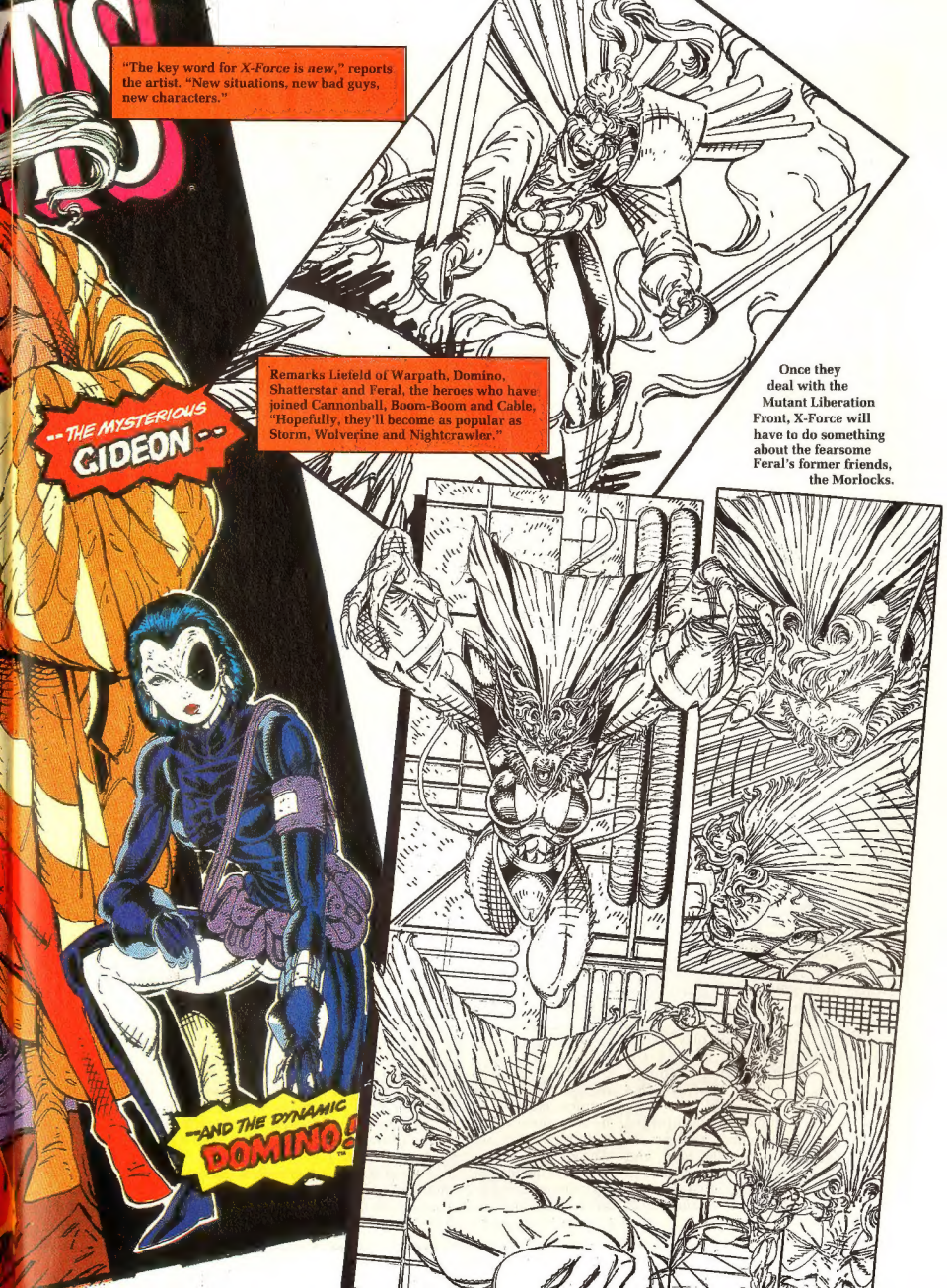
On a short flight of his own, Liefeld will do a one-shot special with an independent publisher sometime this fall. The book, *Youngblood*, features Liefeld's own character creations. "It's a concept I came up with years ago that was original at the time—government superheroes. I was supposed to do the book, but I got side-tracked by the work I was getting from DC and Marvel. Now, I have time to do it, so I'll give it a shot," he says.

Liefeld feels that the independent market is a way for him to test whether or not it's his talent or the Marvel masthead that's selling his comics. "When I go to the independents, I want to do the same kind of book as I do for Marvel. Fans *won't* be disappointed."

Rob Liefeld views the independent market as a field that still has a great deal of potential. "Comics are becoming more accepted these days, not as literature, but as collectibles. Creators can actually make a decent living at this." But he is quick to point out that it's not the money that interests him. "I get to draw more than 360 illustrations an issue, an opportunity that most non-comic artists don't get. I like the freelance aspect of comics. I feel fortunate that in a country where 80% of the people work jobs they hate, I fall into the 20% who love their jobs."



All X-Force, New Mutants, X-Men & Associated Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1991 Marvel Entertainment Group


"The key word for *X-Force* is *new*," reports the artist. "New situations, new bad guys, new characters."
--THE MYSTERIOUS GIDEON--
Remarks Liefeld of Warpath, Domino, Shatterstar and Feral, the heroes who have joined Cannonball, Boom-Boom and Cable, "Hopefully, they'll become as popular as Storm, Wolverine and Nightcrawler."
Once they deal with the Mutant Liberation Front, X-Force will have to do something about the fearsome Feral's former friends, the Morlocks.
--AND THE DYNAMIC DOMINO!--

The Detroit News
THE HOME NEWSPAPER
TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 1932, 59th Year, No. 199 — 38 Pages - THREE CENTS — 15¢ PER WEEK

# STILL▲IN▲DISGUISE

## *Growing up during the Depression provides the subject for a graphic masterwork.*

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

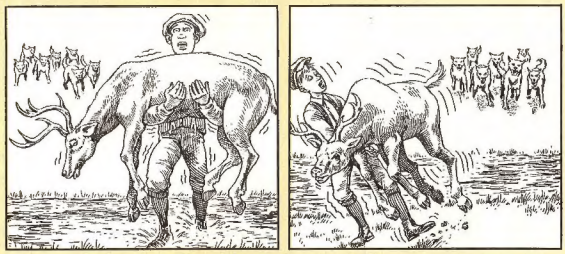
**Jim Vance had Freddie Bloch (inset) *On the Ropes* before writing *Kings in Disguise*.**

# DEER▲SEASON▲OPENS▲TODAY

Jim Vance and Dan Burr are going ahead with plans for a sequel to their acclaimed six-issue mini-series *Kings in Disguise*, the tale of Freddie, a young boy growing up in an America ravaged by the Depression and encountering hobos, labor riots and much more. But the storyline for the follow-up was actually devised long ago.

"This sequel will come from one of the first plays I wrote," explains Vance. "*Kings in Disguise* was written years later, although chronologically, it happens before the other one.

"The second full-length play I wrote was in 1979. It was called *On the Ropes*, and it was the first thing I wrote about Freddie. Actually, I called him Fred there, because that was when he was older. I had been thinking about how he got where he was. He obviously had been on the road, and had all these experiences, and in 1980 or '81, I wrote this play called *Kings in Disguise*, which in Hollywood terms was a prequel."



All Kings Art: Dan Burr

**"[Freddie's] just starting to learn. Next time, we're *really* gonna abuse him!"**

*Kings*' enormous success as a B&W mini-series may have surprised some comics fans, but artist Dan Burr says he was always hopeful. "People were telling me there was a good chance it was going to happen, but I tried not to jinx it by making decisions about it one way or another. I was delighted to find how often we were nominated [for various comics awards]—it's a real nice pat on the back from the industry," says Burr.

Vance and Burr are happy with the way *Kings in Disguise* turned out, but they would still make some minor changes. "I'm enough of a nit-picker that I can go back and point out all sorts of things that I don't like," admits Burr. "I did go back to issue #3, which was the one I was most dissatisfied with, and made a number of little technical changes here and there [for the trade paperback reprinting, now available from Kitchen Sink Press], which nobody will probably notice except for me and maybe Jim, but I feel better about correcting them!"

"There are things that Dan did which I think are just marvelous and I wouldn't change, but he may feel the complete opposite," says Vance. "I did change some writing with lettering corrections, and I even found an anachronism that no one else spotted."

And Vance says the story of a 12-year-old boy growing up in the Depression managed to accomplish ev-

# THREE▲DIE▲IN▲BLAST

"Dan [Burr] has this wonderful flair for facial expressions," notes Vance.

erything they had set out to do with *Kings*. "It deviated a little bit from my original synopsis on down the line, but that's OK—it evolved as we went along," he comments. "The writing evolved, and I would see things in Dan's art that would give me ideas for something else to put in. I learned early on that one thing Dan does that's wonderful is facial expressions. You look at so many comic books and the only thing the characters seem to be able to do is bare their teeth at each other or have a bland expression so that somebody can put in dialogue later. Dan has this wonderful flair for facial expressions, and you're able to *not* write so many things because we could say, 'He should be feeling this right now,' and we can see his face,

Working between Burr's home in Milwaukee and Vance's in Oklahoma was easier than they had expected. "I don't know why it worked out so well exactly, but we seemed to almost develop a telepathy that was astonishingly well-meshed," says Burr.

"It was like a telepathy," agrees Vance, who sent his scripts to Burr and saw art come back. "There really wasn't that much interplay between us."

"...Not a hell of a lot, especially at the beginning. We rarely talked over the scripts initially," Dan Burr remarks.

"We just did our own halves of the thing, and it came out the way it did," explains the writer. "I was marvelously impressed at the way we tapped into each other. I'm sure that some of the

# STRIKE▲CONTINUES

**Despite scenes like these, Vance and Burr were happy with the way *Kings in Disguise* turned out.**

scripts I sent got pretty wordy, but no matter what I put in there, he always found something else he could do to enhance it!"

Jim Vance notes that the next logical step in the story of Freddie is *On the Ropes*, although that may or may not be the title of the follow-up. "At one point, I was thinking about doing a whole string of stories about him, because the character really grabbed me. I know what happens to him for years to come, because I sat down and figured it out. Later, I decided I didn't want to spend the rest of my life writing stories about one person, but I still know the information, and he still fascinates me. He's just starting to learn—he doesn't know what he's getting into yet. Next time, we're *really* gonna abuse him!"

# GOVERNOR▲VISITS SHANTYTOWN

and that communicates it. I can put something else in the caption, because Dan's art is telling us how he feels—I don't have to be redundant!

"One of the things I enjoy most about looking back over the pages is looking at Freddie's face, and seeing what crosses his mind. I can see the little flash of inspiration on the page, and when he realizes it, it's there, he doesn't have to tell us. It has to be very abstract before I put it in words, because most of the time, it's right there on the page," says Vance.

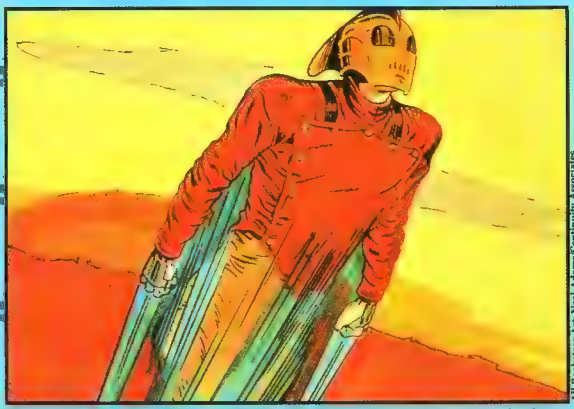
**Dan Burr is delighted by *Kings*' recognition. "It's a nice pat on the back."**

Kings Trade Paperback: Copyright 1990 Kitchen Sink Press

Kings In Disguise: Copyright 1988, 1989, 1990 James Vance & Dan Burr

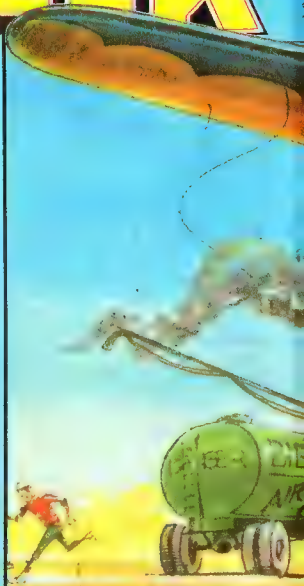
# ROCKETEER

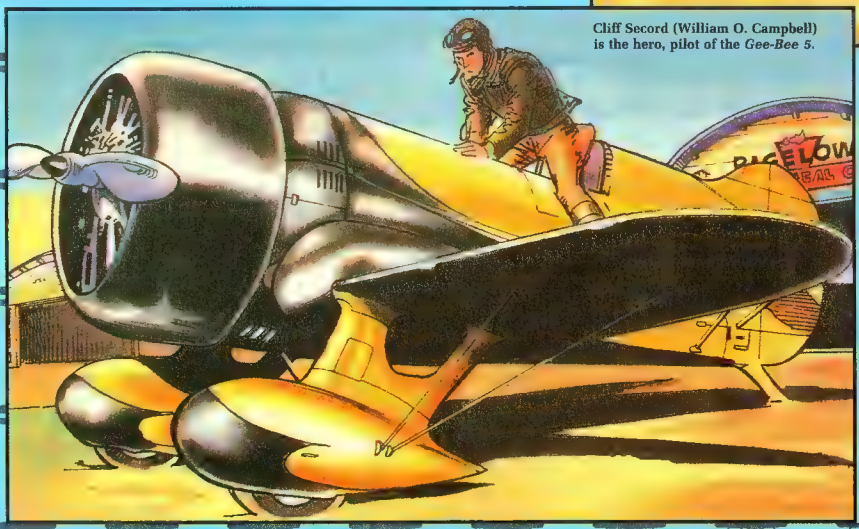
## *Dave Stevens' airborne adventurer takes to the skies.*



All Rocketeer Art: Neal Adams/Continuity Associates

These illustrations were specially executed by legendary comics artist Neal Adams and his Continuity Associates colleagues for use by the Walt Disney Company in pursuing licensed merchandise deals. Although not storyboards *per se*, they show key action sequences in *The Rocketeer*.

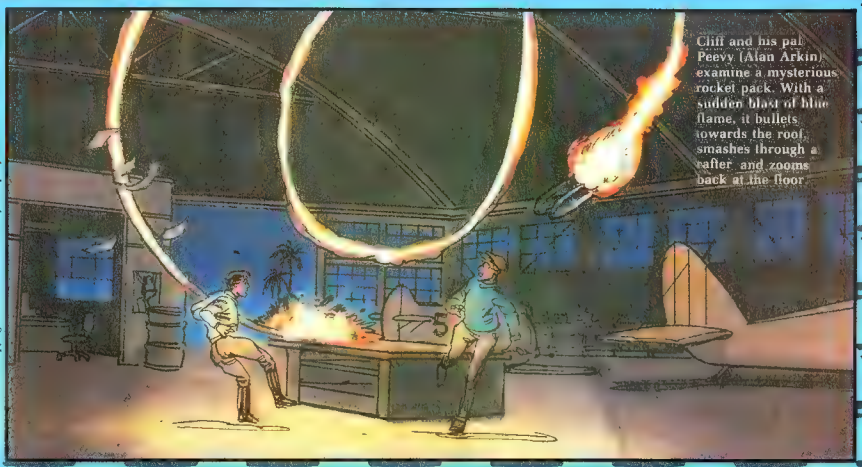




Cliff Secord (William O. Campbell) is the hero, pilot of the *Gee-Bee 5*.

All Rocketeer Art: Courtesy The Walt Disney Company

Secord's adventure begins in a chance encounter with a gangster-driven roadster. That fuel truck in the background will soon provide explosive action.



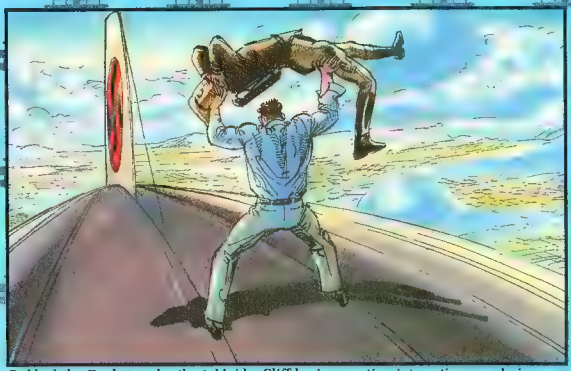
Cliff and his pal Peevy (Alan Arkin) examine a mysterious rocket pack. With a sudden blast of blue flame, it bullets towards the roof, smashes through a rafter and zooms back at the floor

All Rocketeer Art: Copyright 1991 The Walt Disney Company

When a fellow pilot faces danger, Cliff feels he has no choice but to strap the untested rocket to his back, launch himself skyward and gamble that he'll survive the experience.

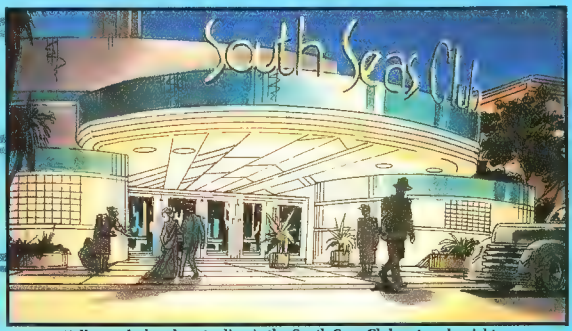
Chaplin Field is the perfect airfield, catering to pilots of all types—even that elusive Howard Hughes (Terry O'Quinn).

Using the helmet to help steer, Cliff attempts a mid-air rescue. Unfortunately, he doesn't know the rocket pack's limits and the bi-plane's propeller is very close.



Dubbed the Rocketeer by the tabloids, Cliff begins meeting interesting people in strange places—like Lothar (a strongman not unlike '40s star Rondo "the Creeper" Hatton; special makeup by Oscar winner Rick Baker).

There's a reason Cliff Secord will risk everything. She's Jenny Blake (played by Jennifer Connelly, see STARLOG SPECTACULAR #2, now on sale).




In 1938 Hollywood, the place to dine is the South Seas Club, a trendy night spot run by a gangster (Paul Sorvino) and frequented by such stars as W.C. Fields and Neville Sinclair (Timothy Dalton).

The action continues when *The Rocketeer*, directed by Joe Johnston from a script by Danny Bilson and Paul De Meo, opens June 21.

# AMERICAN IMAGE

## *Grant Miehm sends a flag-draped hero up the pole to see who salutes.*

**By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL**

The story is less about a 'super-soldier' than about the guy who takes on that role," says plotter/artist Grant Miehm about the latest hero to bear the venerable name of the Shield. "I try to set it in as 'realistic' a setting as possible: If something like this were to actually happen, there would be your Oliver Norths and your Watergate-type situations surrounding its creation.

"Even though the guy in the Shield suit would feel good about doing it, eventually, he would uncover the various things that led to his creation—good, bad or indifferent. *That's* what the story's about—how he responds to the good and bad things about it."

The Shield was originally published by Archie Comics (then known as MLJ) in the 1940s. A second version designed by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby came out in the 1950s as *The Secret Life of Private Strong*. In the '60s, those versions were part of the Mighty Comics line, a short-lived attempt to cash in on the era's superhero craze by reviving Archie's long-dormant action characters. Twenty years later, the two Shields returned along with the other heroes in Archie's Red Circle (later Archie Adventure) group of titles.

Two years ago, DC Comics purchased the rights to the Archie superheroes and has now set them up in a universe of their own, under the Impact imprint. It is up to Miehm to devise the background for this latest Shield.

The new Shield is Joseph Mitchell Higgins, who is installed by the U.S. military as the current incarnation. The original 1940s Shield, according to Miehm, disappeared from active service some 20-25 years ago. "The original Shield was never really an official arm of the military, but he was a well-known public figure," the writer explains. "He thus inspired the military officials to create this viable weapon and tag it in a public sort of way, so he would be recognizable to the public as an image of America."

Miehm's Shield, he admits, is more or less the second Shield Archie had published, but he considers it an entirely new character, with a completely different costume.

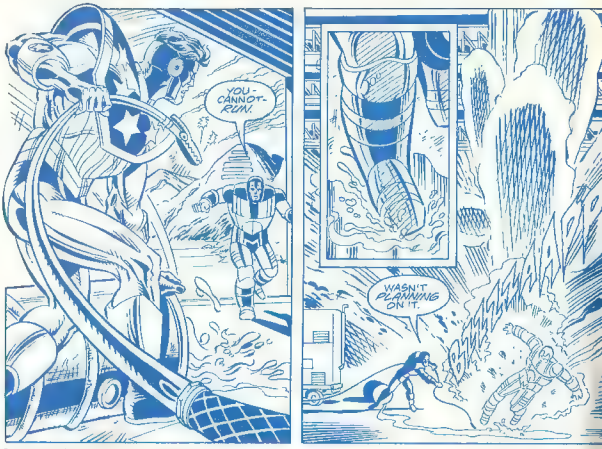
"We're pretty much dropping that second Archie Shield out of continuity," the artist says. "The title that popped into my head when I first came up with this was *Legend of the Shield*. My original proposal, submitted a year-and-a-half ago, had that title. I wanted to do a character that was an extension of the original; the idea was, if the original character existed, how could we bring him into a created world and make it look like a logical extension?"

So, what is the Shield, then? Well, says Miehm, one thing he's *not*—despite the red-white-and-blue costume—is Captain America. "He *wasn't* injected with a serum, given radiation treatments or anything like that. He's an incredibly well-trained soldier, versed in all forms of combat, martial arts, weapons, everything. He has the training from all the service branches—Special Forces, Rangers, Marines—he knows all the ins and outs of that stuff. He's functionally five times as strong as a normal human, but that's through diet, exercise and conditioning.

"Whatever powers he has are in the suit he wears," Miehm continues. "It's made of 'Mannexelar,' a light material that, when woven together, becomes almost indestructible. The series bible says a strand of Mannexelar is about 25 times more impervious than Kevlar. And it fits like Spandex."

Although Miehm tied his Shield to the original, he says he's no expert on the MLJ character. "I have *some* familiarity with the original Shield of the '40s; I'm not an authority or an aficionado," he notes. "I can remember reading *Fly-Man* as a kid and seeing the original Shield show up there and in *The Mighty Crusaders*. Before preparing the proposal, I went out and found three or four issues of *Pep* [the title the Shield appeared in during the '40s] to read those. But, if you're looking for a base to ground something

**Unlike Captain America, "Whatever powers [the Shield] has are in the suit he wears."**






Impact: Trademark of & Published by DC Comics

in, none of that has any meat to it; there isn't really anything except the most peripheral stuff that you can garner from that. We kept a few of the names; I lifted some of the names to use for characters. Other than that, there's almost *no* relation to the original. And the farther we get into the new series, the readers will see that."

Of all the Archie/Impact characters, why did Miehm opt for the Shield? The answer, he says, is at least partially in the name itself.

"The word 'Shield' conjures up many really neat images," he explains. "When you think of it, you get a protector, a soldier, a symbol of liberty—that's very powerful."

That symbolism ties in with the new wave of patriotism currently washing over America. The storyline relies on Joe Higgins discovering some dirty secrets behind his mission, however, although Miehm promises that won't work against the series.

"The first year, basically, involves the Shield discovering the bad things that led to his creation and his attempts to expose the people who did this," Miehm says. "But he doesn't have the connections or wherewithal to do that. In the first year, it's a story of survival. He goes AWOL early on and the Army goes after him with everything they've got; the suit's indestructible, but *he* may not be.

Photo. Courtesy Grant Miehm

**Plotter/artist Grant Miehm opted not to write *Legend of the Shield* because "I had to cut the line somewhere."**

**Ready to make an Impact in comics are (left to right) Jaguar, Fly, Shield, Comet and Web.**

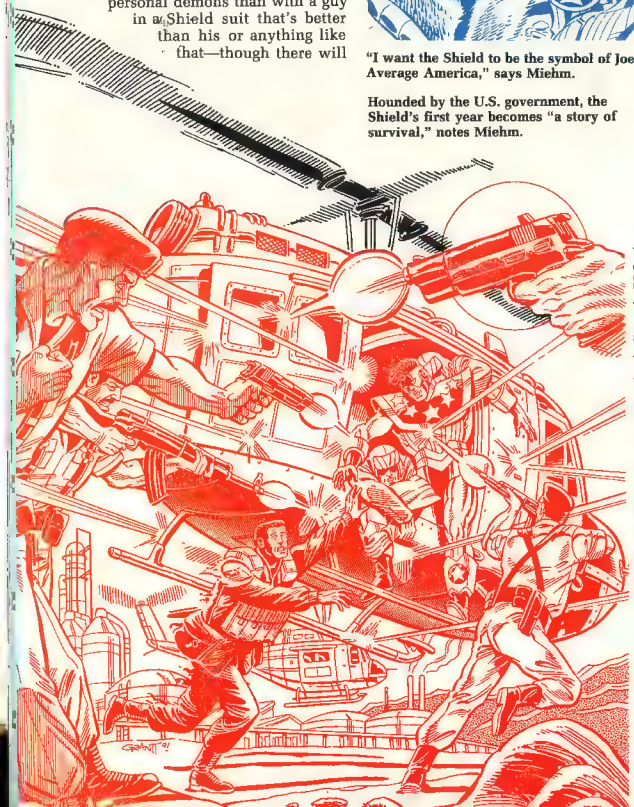
"When you get into the book, you'll find that the plot has nothing to do with the government or the military, but *specific* people within the government or the military. You'll see that Joe Higgins is really the all-American boy; as much as I can, I want him to be the symbol of Joe Average America. What people think of their country has less to do with America than about a solid ideal that people are pursuing. Joe is the representation of that ideal.

"That said, it won't be the government or the military that comes off as bad; they, after all, sponsored the project with good intentions. But we'll see how bad people in the right positions can abuse power. That will be one of the series' underlying themes."

Does that mean readers won't see costumed villains facing down a flag-bedecked hero? "We've got all kinds of villains," Miehm replies. "We have villains of the standard super-variety, but many of the villains Joe's going to face have much more to do with his own personal demons than with a guy in a Shield suit that's better than his or anything like that—though there will be more than enough of that kind of stuff. I've slanted the series toward action-adventure, which is what I think readers enjoy and what I enjoy doing, but there must be stories in which the enemy is unseen, or the enemy is yourself, or the enemy is some guy who has more money than you do. There have to be stories in which the hero's greater strengths and abilities have *nothing* to do with the outcome."

**"I want the Shield to be the symbol of Joe Average America," says Miehm.**

**Hounded by the U.S. government, the Shield's first year becomes "a story of survival," notes Miehm.**



Joe Higgins won't be alone in his fight either. "He picks up people who help him, but it's like an underground railroad; there's not a group of superheroes waiting to help him. The supporting cast is half friends and half family. There's a family group around Joe Higgins, but being an Army officer and having grown up in a military family, the people he knows are scattered around the country. That gives us a broad base of people for him to meet."

There may not be a "group of superheroes" for the Shield to contact immediately, but Miehm assures that he'll run into the other Impact heroes—the Fly, Jaguar, the Comet and the Web—in time. "The Impact Universe is very well-constructed and defined at this point as a jumping-off point for all the creators," he says. "It's a very tight-knit group of guys; I personally communicate with three or four of them on a regular basis to find out what they're doing, to work out crossovers, etc. Down the line, in the Shield's story, there will be situations with the Fly and, most particularly, with the Web. We've set up the continuity so that the Web is interlaced into every book. I took a shine to that idea."

Shield Character: Trademark & Copyright Archie Comics Publications, Inc. Used under license by DC Comics.

Miehm is working in an unusual manner on this series, particularly in this day and age of the high-profile writer/artist. Although he's plotting and pencilling the series, the script is by Mark Waid.

"Not writing the dialogue myself was a matter of my own involvement and other things I'm doing at DC," he notes. "I had to cut the line somewhere and I decided the dialogue was something I could hand to somebody who was tuned into my ideas. I'm perfectly capable of doing it myself; there are other things I will be doing on the Shield, like the annual. Actually, the book's plotting is probably the biggest part of the job, because the things I've set up are very detailed and intricate. I'm working on issue #4 now and I'm setting up stuff that won't pan out until the annual eight or nine months and several hundred pages later. I have a real tight line on what I'm doing.

"I have a really terrific relationship with Mark Waid; we go way back. Mark was the first DC editor to give me a job. I think he has a real ear for the editorial set-up these titles have been given," Miehm continues. "I give Mark *carte blanche* on the dialogue unless I think he has gotten something out of character. In addition, when you're working with someone from day one on a project—he's putting words in the characters' mouths, he's finding the voice for each character—you have to give him some leeway. Mark is good at this; I trust him a great deal."

All Shield Art: Grant Miehm/Courtesy DC Comics

A.R.M.S. CONTROL CENTRAL, THIS IS PROJECT: SHIELD REPORTING. FINAL TRAINING EXERCISE IS COMPLETE.
EXOSKELETON OPERATING AT OPTIMUM LEVEL...
...MANNEXALAR SUITWEAVE PROVIDED MAXIMUM INVULNERABILITY...
...AND IF YOU'RE READING THIS RADIO TRANSMISSION, THEN ALL SYSTEMS ARE FUNCTIONAL.
FROM WHERE THIS SOLDIER STANDS-- PROJECT: SHIELD LOOKS TO BE A COMPLETE SUCCESS.

**Miehm chose the Shield because his name identifies him as "a protector, a soldier, a symbol of liberty."**

So, was this whole Impact deal a corporate undertaking—"Here's your universe, here are your characters, make them work"? Miehm says no, it was more collaborative than that.

"Editors Mike Gold and Brian Augustyn had many solid ideas to begin with, and then all the creative teams got together and expanded on them," he recalls. "Brian and Mike had broad ideas about each of the titles and what they would like to see. In the case of the Shield, what *I* came up with was the military background, which is the classic concept for the Shield anyway. Once Mike and Brian outlined these ideas, each creative team thought up their own angle, and then, we all got together and worked on making it work as an inter-related whole. It's like a piece of elastic; it will stretch and contract as the ideas come and go."

With the glut of titles on the stands now, with old favorites like Spider-Man, Superman and X-Men headlining as many as four titles apiece, is there room for a new set of old heroes?

"What fans are looking for now—as much as they have their old favorites—is a group of titles, or a specific title like *Legend of the Shield*, where they can start at day one and go down the road with the character," Grant Miehm answers. "I think they're ready to find a character or set of characters they can get involved with, the way I got involved with the Fantastic Four as a kid. That's something I think got lost in comics and it's ready to be regained. That's what Impact is all about."

# FANTASY MODELING

***Comics characters strike a heroic pose in three dimensions.***

Although the Silver Surfer and Iron Man are longtime veterans in the Marvel Universe, they're somewhat new to model builders. This particular version of Shellhead features his latest armor.

The Fantastic Four's arch-enemy, Doctor Doom, is now also ready to wreak havoc in model form. Doom is the latest Marvel figure offered by Horizon, although there are plans to release Thor and two others.

Two Marvel favorites, Spider-Man and the Punisher, have made their way across Horizon. While the Punisher is new to the model line, Aurora released a previous Spidey kit in the '60s.

Batman is currently the only DC character Horizon offers in its vinyl model line. Another unique aspect of this particular model is that the Darknight Detective is in his black-armored garb from the 1989 movie, as opposed to his traditional blue and grey outfit.

It's modelin' time for Ben Grimm, better known as the Thing. This particular kit is an older version of the Fantastic Four hero, who has undergone some rocky changes over the years.

Batman Character Trademark & Copyright 1993 DC Comics Inc.

Horizon assisted Marvel in celebrating Captain America's 50th anniversary with this special edition vinyl kit. The 15" model is a familiar Cap pose, which depicts him as defender of the red, white and blue.

Wolverine has popped his claws through comics and entered the model industry. Standing only 11" tall, this diminutive X-Man is shorter than the rest of the Marvel character kits.

Unlike the new Hulk, Horizon's vinyl kit is reminiscent of ol' Greenskin's days as a savage, simple-minded behemoth. Aurora also offered a Hulk kit.

# A MAN CALLED FLINTSTONE

***Yabba-dabba-doo! Henry Corden still speaks for the cartoon caveman.***

By KYLE COUNTS

Re-creating a role that someone else has made famous is a tricky bit of show business, even when that role is only a two-dimensional figment of an animator's imagination. Henry Corden knows what it's like to follow a tough act: In 1977, after the death of actor Alan Reed, he became the new Fred Flintstone, head of Hanna-Barbera's enduring prehistoric cartoon family, *The Flintstones*, which premiered in 1960 on ABC and ran for six seasons in prime-time.

"I was kind of destined to do [the part]," says Corden, "although Hanna-Barbera did audition many others at the time, just in case. But I wound up with it."

At the time of the changeover, Corden, who joined Hanna-Barbera's stable of voiceover artists in 1961, was quite familiar with Fred. Not only had he ghosted for Reed on the show when Flintstone was required to sing, he had also filled in for the ailing actor when voice problems prevented him from

**Corden knew *The Flintstones* would still be around today to celebrate life as a modern stone-age family.**

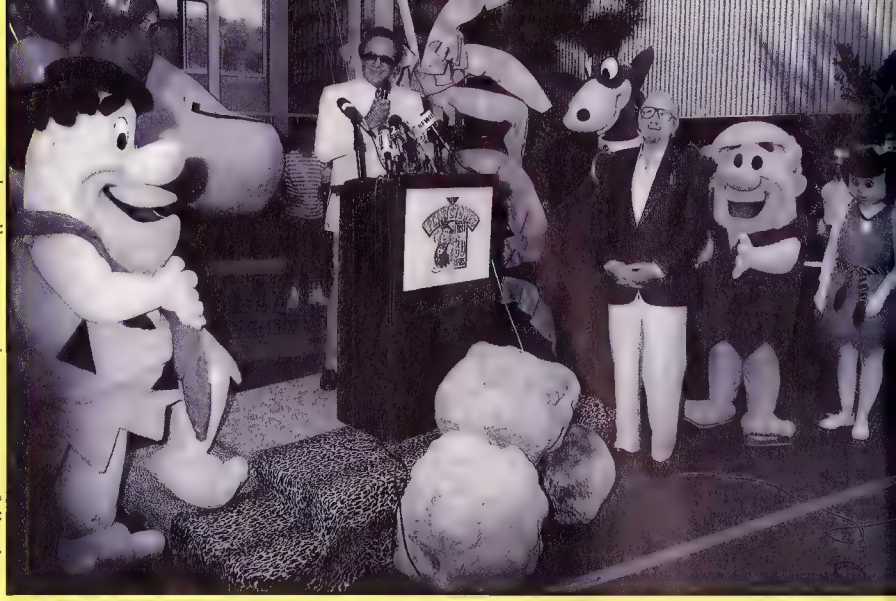


Photo By & Copyright 1991 Scott Downie/Courtesy Hanna-Barbera/The Lippin Group

**At the *Flintstones 30th Anniversary* salute, Henry Corden (with glasses & beard) celebrates with Fred, Joe Barbera (at podium), Dino, Barney and Betty.**

participating in two *Flintstones* spoken-word records. "I did the records because [Hanna-Barbera] needed them right away—they couldn't wait until his voice got better," Corden explains.

Taking over for Reed was, not surprisingly, a source of anxiety for Corden, who knew that, by then, Fred Flintstone had become "deeply imbedded in the culture of America, certainly young America." He was confident of his talent, but would the *Flintstones* cast—principally, Jean VanderPyl (Wilma) and Mel Blanc (Barney Rubble)—accept him as the new Fred?

"Was I nervous? Absolutely," Corden admits. "Because even if the cast accepted me, would the public accept me? The first time I played Fred [after Reed's death], I was so nervous that my nose began to bleed. The rest of the time everything went smoothly, and I was immediately taken into the cast's bosom. It was wonderful.

"Strangely enough, the change was accepted and no big deal was made about it. In fact, the only people who knew that there was a change were people within the industry. I'm sure there were some people out there with good ears who recognized the difference, but I was pretty much accepted."

Comparing his Fred to Reed's makes Corden uncomfortable. "I don't know that I would compare them. That wouldn't be for me to say. I hadn't even thought about it." He does acknowledge, however, that there were basic differences in their respective approaches to the character's voice.

"We had to be different, for one important reason: Alan used his natural voice. I had to go away from my natural voice and re-create it to make it sound like Fred. That being the case, it made it quite a bit more difficult. Fred is more blustery than my own voice, a little deeper and tougher. You know, [assuming a Jackie Gleason voice] coming out of this kind of situation.

"As the years have gone by, I've made Fred more and more my own. Rather than sound as much like Alan's Fred as I could, I've more and more made it my own as a matter of comfort for me. Nowadays, it's more my voice than Alan's. My Fred has a different attitude than Alan's."

The widespread rumor that *The Flintstones* was inspired by/borrowed from Jackie Gleason's *The Honeymooners* is "absolutely accurate," says Corden. "Jackie is, of course, very close to Fred Flintstone. That's exactly who Fred was based on. As a matter of fact, from what I understand, Jackie Gleason was going to sue [when he heard about *The Flintstones*]. But *The Flintstones* became so popular and lovable, that he decided not to for fear it would reflect on him!"

Further commenting on the similarities between Fred and Ralph Kramden, Corden adds, "Like Ralph [Kramden], Fred is a lovable guy who's not too smart. Somebody—usually it was Wilma—always ends up helping him pick up the marbles so that he can go on with life. And that's just about everybody, I think. None of us is so smart that we're complete captains of our souls. We always have help."

Corden proved so adept at mimicking Gleason that he was asked to reloop Gleason's salty dialogue for the *Smokey & the Bandit* movies when it came time to sanitize them for TV airing. "There were a lot of four-letter words in those pictures," he chuckles.

Ask the show business veteran if he ever thought his acting career would encompass stage, screen *and* cartoons, and Corden's reply makes it clear that the performing arts were the *only* line of work he ever truly considered.

"I was born in Montreal, Canada, but my family moved to New York when I was very young. That's when I saw *Flying Down to Rio*, one of Fred Astaire's first pictures. I saw Fred Astaire and I said, 'My God, that's what I want to be!'—meaning up there on screen, acting, dancing, dressing the way that he did."

Corden attended school in New York, but jumped ship before high school graduation ("I got out of there as soon as I could"). At age 16, he joined a New York theatrical group that performed three to four live stage shows a year. "The only training I had was in

front of an audience," he says of his formal acting education. "You learned what it was to get a laugh and a tear and all the rest, which is all you can do in a classroom."

At 18, Corden took a job as social director on the borscht circuit in the Catskill Mountains. Following that, he "did a little bit of everything—stage, radio, a little dancing"—before relocating in 1944 to Los Angeles. There he was put under contract to agent Harry Sherman for a year, during which time he co-starred in *Golden Boy* at the Pasadena Playhouse. "Unfortunately, I didn't do any pictures because the industry was in a bad way at the time," he remarks, referring to the pinch being felt in Hollywood due to WWII.

Dropped by Sherman after his contract's expiration, Corden fortunately landed a role in *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* (1947) opposite Danny Kaye, playing a villain along with Boris Karloff. Other pictures followed, including 1952's *Scaramouche* ("One of the highlights of my life—it was a very small role, but it was so edifying"), *Viva Zapata!* (1952), *Jupiter's Darling* (1955) and *The Ten Commandments* (1956). In the '60s, a whole new generation would discover Corden when he turned up on sitcoms like *Mr. Ed*, *Hogan's Heroes* and *The Monkees* (where he played the Monkees' landlord, Mr. Babbitt). The latter experience was—to borrow a phrase of the era—a "trip" for Corden. " 'Crazy' was the word for it! There was a kind of anarchy about the boys' attitudes that made it a little tough for me because I was a very traditional actor. But I got used to it, especially by the second season."

"I've more and more made [Fred's voice] my own," says Corden.

"Mel [Blanc] was great fun to work with," recalls Corden. "We were a good team."

Looking back over his stage and screen career affords Corden a special satisfaction. "I was rather fortunate. I did various kinds of roles—everything from funny guys to villains, Americans to foreigners—which was very good on the one hand, but on the other hand, it wasn't because they like to typecast you in Hollywood, and I was constantly in competition with other actors in all these areas. Still, I had my share of work; I did well."

Voiceover work entered the picture around 1961, when, thanks to his friend Herschel Bernardi, Corden landed the part of the little fish opposite Charlie the Tuna (voiced by Bernardi) in a series of Starkist Tuna commercials. "I signed with Herschel's agent, and he sent me out on a general audition to Hanna-Barbera—and that's how it all started," he says.

From that open call, Corden played various animated characters for Hanna-Barbera—a mumbling papa bear, an "Indian Indian"—before being tapped as a regular for *Jonny Quest* in 1964. Each week, Jonny

(played by Tim Matheson) and his father, Dr. Benton Quest (John Stephenson, who also voiced Mr. Slate on *The Flintstones*; later Don Messick), seemed to run into an exotic new villain of some kind, which was fine by Corden. "Some of the places they visited were make-believe places, and I had to make up special dialects—that was fun."

Fred Flintstone marked the next phase of Corden's career, a phase that saw him through 1986's *The Flintstone Kids* (where he played *both* of "Freddy" Flintstone's parents) and continues to this day. Did he find it difficult stepping into Alan Reed's shoes? "Not really," Corden remarks, "because I pretty well understood the character, having worked on the show before. The only hard part was getting into the groove that had been established by Alan—finding the same thrust to the character, the same sound. It was a technical thing. Now it's getting easier because Fred is becoming more and more me. But I had to be mostly Alan in the beginning, and that's a very difficult thing to do, to pattern yourself after someone else."

Did the actor ever think *The Flintstones* would enjoy such long-running popularity? "In this case, I did," he admits. "There are certain things you know will go on and on, like Mickey Mouse. Who would have thought that Mickey Mouse would have lasted 60 years when he first started? But there he is, he's still there.

"People love Fred because he's a kind of Everyman, and those who watch the cartoons...if you're very young, you're amused by him; if you're older, you can feel a little superior to him and, at the same time, recognize yourself in him and say, 'Even though I'm not the smartest guy, somehow things will come out OK.' And, just like with Fred, they usually do."

As Corden has not seen *The Simpsons*, he's unable to comment incisively on the comparisons that critics have drawn between Fred Flintstone and Homer Simpson. "I don't know why I haven't seen the show; it just doesn't occur to me. I'm probably watching something else when it's on. But I wish it well." Told that Homer has a knack for getting into jams and, by the episode's end, realizing the error of his ways, Corden agrees that the basic set-up is "exactly what happened on *The Flintstones* each week."

His "best" memories of *The Flintstones* are of working with the late Mel Blanc (STARLOG #102), who voiced the role of Fred's next-door neighbor and best friend, Barney Rubble. "Mel was great fun to work with; we were great together, we were a good team," Corden says. "We respected each other and got along well. We made great jokes with each other. It was a good relationship. That I remember—that and my relationship with Jean VanderPyl [Wilma], the only original member of the group [still living; see COMICS SCENE #19].

"Jean...what can I say? She's an old trouper from way back, from radio. A lovely, lovely lady who was most helpful when I took over for Alan—all of the actors were, but her in particular. I see her whenever there's something to do with the Flintstones that Wilma appears in. But, unfortunately, there aren't many commercials done with Wilma; they're usually with Barney and Fred. Wilma doesn't seem to enter into [ad agency] Ogilvy & Mather's advertising approach [as far as the cereal commercials]. The last time I saw Jean was when we taped the *Flintstones 30th Anniversary Show*. We're scheduled to do an English commercial soon, for—of all things—a Flintstones *pasta*."

**A new Flintstones TV movie is only a rumor right now, but after *The Jetsons Meet the Flintstones*, anything's possible.**

As for the stories circulating in Toontown that NBC has in the works a two-hour animated *Flintstones* movie, Corden says it is, at this point, only gossip. "There's talk that in the latter part of the year, we'll be doing a two-hour movie. I know nothing about it other than that. I would be re-creating my role as Fred, though I haven't actually sat down and negotiated anything yet—that'll happen when they say to my agent, 'We want to do it on such-and-such a date. Is Henry available?' Then, we start negotiating."

If the movie did well, would Corden consider being part of a new *Flintstones* TV series? "Absolutely," he shoots back. "I love doing Fred. It's such lovely, easy work, and the people I work with are so nice, why wouldn't I?" he asks rhetorically.

"And if the movie did well, I'm sure NBC would say, 'Hey, Hanna-Barbera: *Do it.*' But it's not Hanna-Barbera that makes that kind of decision; it's the network. If we have big ratings and many people want it, then by all means, I would do it."

Corden's feelings about the upcoming live-action *Flintstones* movie (starring John Goodman) are on the neutral side. "I didn't feel any terrible pangs of any kind [when I heard about it]," he says. "I could see where

**The actor would love to do a new *Flintstones* TV series, but remains neutral about a live-action film.**

Goodman would be right for the part. The only question is: Is it the right thing to do, a live-action version? On the other hand, if it works, it works, and that's fine. It's no skin off my tush."

As for having a preference between the "live" performing arts or voiceover work, Corden diplomatically chooses both. "I enjoyed it all; each had its own special challenges. I enjoyed acting very much; that's why I did as much stage work as I did. It's the final judge of an actor's ability to get up on stage for two hours and keep the audience amused—to not stop and go, as you do in films or TV. And I enjoy doing voiceovers. But I retired from appearing in front of the camera about 10 years ago."

His last film, in fact, was the Chevy Chase comedy *Modern Problems*, wherein Corden played the maître d' of Dubrovnik's, a restaurant "named after a city in Yugoslavia. That was the last thing I did—I'd kinda had it by then for various reasons."

Currently, Corden is under contract to Ogilvy & Mather, the ad agency that produces the Flintstones cereal TV spots. He also does commercials "here and there" for other products. Last March, he participated in a publicity campaign on behalf of the LA Children's Hospital, a fund-raising effort co-sponsored by Hanna-Barbera and Denny's Restaurants. Otherwise, Corden is content to sit back and enjoy the fruits of his labors.

"Now I'm just doing voiceovers, and I'm enjoying it very much," he says. "They'll call me and I'll go in for a few hours. I don't push for work any more. I do a lot of traveling these days. I've been to wonderful places: China, Japan, Paris, London. We have a ball doing that."

As to whether or not he would be happy being remembered as the latter-day voice of Fred Flintstone, Henry Corden beams, "If I'm remembered at all, wouldn't that be wonderful? No matter how."

**"I love doing Fred," says Corden. "It's such easy work, and the people I work with are so nice."**

All Flintstones Characters & Art: Copyright 1983, 1985, 1987,1990, 1991 Hanna-Barbera Productions Inc.

# THE MAN WITH

By KYLE COUNTS

Simpsons Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1990, 1991 20th Century Fox Film Corp.

Bonehead. Bald guy. Working-class dolt. Dan Castellaneta has been called all these names and more, but he has learned not to take it personally—it's all in the line of duty.

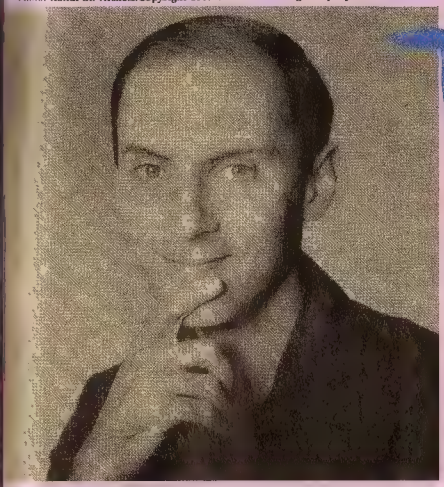
Once a week, in the course of a rigorous eight- to 12-hour day, the 33-year-old actor records voiceover tracks for one-fifth of America's favorite blue-collar cartoon clan, *The Simpsons*. As Homer Simpson, the proud but ineffectual donut-gulping patriarch of TV's newest First Family, Castellaneta has created a lovable loser the likes of which TV animation hasn't seen since the heyday of Fred Flintstone (see page 43.)

Castellaneta loves his work, but, perhaps even more important, so does the viewing public. *The Simpsons* is fledgling Fox Broadcasting Company's biggest ratings success to date, holding its own even when moved from its original Sunday night berth to its current Thursday time slot opposite *The Cosby Show*. The series has spawned a merchandising bonanza that rivals that of the New Kids on the Block, with untold consumer dollars being spent daily on towels, pajamas, dolls—even a *Simpsons* record album (which has spawned the #1 hit, "Do the Bartman"). Even the Flintstones didn't crack the Billboard Hot 100.

As popular as *The Simpsons* is, Castellaneta doesn't fear being mobbed in California shopping malls by adoring fans. That's partly due to the fact that Castellaneta's principal source of revenue comes from his cartoon and commercial voiceover work, but also due to the efforts of FBC's publicity department to separate the actor from his small-screen persona—the idea being to treat Homer almost as if he were a three-dimensional entity.

"I guess Fox would rather keep the illusion going," Castellaneta says. "At the same time, I'm not really anxious to run out there and tell everybody that I'm Homer Simpson. It would create a whole higher profile of me being a

Photo. Randi St. Nichols/Copyright 1989 Fox Broadcasting Company



# THREE HAIRS

Castellaneta likes his character, but "I'm not really anxious to run out there and tell everybody that I'm Homer Simpson."

## *For Dan Castellaneta, a.k.a. Homer Simpson, life is just a rogue's gallery of voiceovers.*

voice of a cartoon. I don't see that as really furthering my career as an actor—a *human* actor. If I audition for a film or TV show, I'm *not* going to show them a reel of Homer Simpson.

"On the other hand, it *is* a great conversation starter when I meet casting people, and I have to admit I've used it to my advantage. I'm doing a play right now, and in order to get any publicity on it, I had to say I was the voice of Homer Simpson."

So, then, is he ever recognized on the street? "There are people who've been able to recognize me on the street as Homer. Either they've seen an interview I've done on TV, or they've seen my picture in a magazine. I also do a lot of theater. And some of them put two and two together from having seen *The Tracey Ullman Show*."

Born in Chicago and reared in the Illinois suburb of Oak Park, Castellaneta attended Northern Illinois University, where he majored in art education and minored in theater—his goal being to become an art teacher. "Instead, I decided to try my hand at being a practicing artist, as it were, be it in theater or painting," he adds.

Schoolmates impressed by his sense of humor urged him to audition for the famed Second City improvisational comedy troupe. Two auditions later, he was invited to become a member and stayed on for almost five years (1982 to 1987). Tracey Ullman attended one of the troupe's shows and was knocked out by Castellaneta's performance. She invited him to join the cast of her comedy-variety series, which was set to premiere on Fox. He immediately pulled up stakes and relocated to Southern California, joining the show in March 1987 and remaining until its cancellation in early 1990.

Recalls Castellaneta, "When I auditioned for Tracey, she noticed that I had done a lot of voiceovers, which interested her. I thought, 'Gee, I wonder why?' I thought at first it was because I was able to do different voices and it was a sketch-oriented show; I guess it was also because I was doing cartoons."

Castellaneta played numerous roles during his nearly three-year run with the series, including Ullman's boss, Mr. LeRoy, and the gay father of 14-year-old Francesca (another Ullman character). It was his Homer Simpson, however, that would prove to have the most impact.

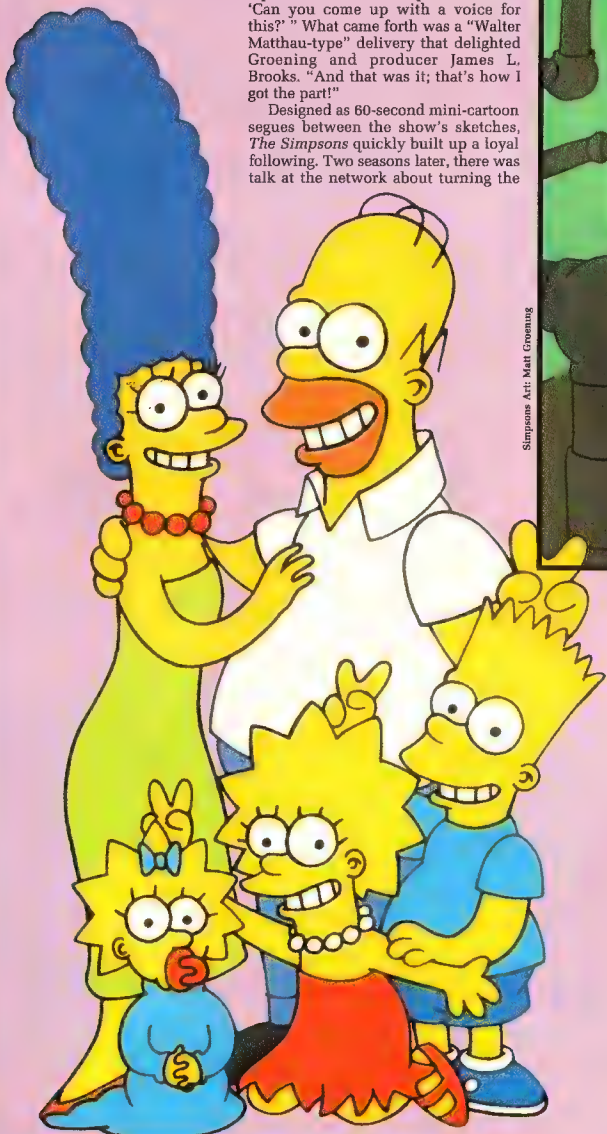
"The first day [on the job], we read

It's no picnic for the *Simpsons* cast to keep from laughing during takes.

**The actor denies critics' comments that *The Simpsons* is anti-family.**

the show and we all went down to the recording studio at Fox, where I met [series creator] Matt Groening," remembers Castellaneta. "He showed me a picture of Homer Simpson and said, 'Can you come up with a voice for this?' " What came forth was a "Walter Matthau-type" delivery that delighted Groening and producer James L. Brooks. "And that was it; that's how I got the part!"

Designed as 60-second mini-cartoon segues between the show's sketches, *The Simpsons* quickly built up a loyal following. Two seasons later, there was talk at the network about turning the bits into a half-hour primetime series, a move that both surprised and delighted Castellaneta.



Simpsons Art: Matt Groening

"When we were doing the short cartoons, we were really getting a kick out of them," he says. "We were all big fans. We would ask Matt what was going to happen next, and we speculated about the characters—where they lived, what they did. I always thought it would be great to do it as a half-hour show. Then, Matt went around the country with a half-hour of the minute pieces and said that they really went over great. I always thought in my head that it would make a great half-hour [show], but I never thought Fox would do it. It seemed too impossible to imagine."

Castellaneta likens the voiceover recording of *The Simpsons* to a "half-radio" show. "Usually, the director is in the booth and the actors are all in the same room with the writers. Because everyone's in the same room, we have to be real quiet. Takes have been ruined because somebody laughed. Even Jim Brooks ruined one.

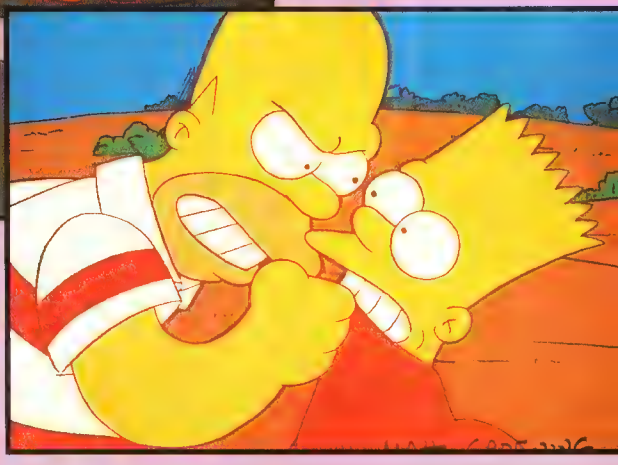
"We all sit in a semi-circle around a table, and we do the script scene by scene, as opposed to a regular animated show, which goes line by line.

**Homer doesn't mind Bart's constant clamoring for the spotlight. "That way, I stay outta trouble."**

Sometimes, if Sam or Matt is stuck for a line and the writers are brainstorming, I'll brainstorm along with them. So do Harry [Shearer], Julie [Kavner] and Yeardley [Smith]—we all pitch in a bit here and there, but nothing huge."

Unlike the rote performances found on so many Saturday morning cartoon shows, *The Simpsons* "really is an acting challenge," Castellaneta maintains. "It's like acting in front of a microphone. We really move our bodies: If our character has to run down a hallway, we'll run in place. One time Nancy [Cartwright] had to make a choking sound, and Julie actually went over and put her hands around her neck to give her that feeling."

**Homer and Bart don't always get along, but Dan Castellaneta describes Nancy Cartwright as "a joy to work with."**



It's done very much like a one-camera sitcom, where you'll do anywhere from three to 15 different takes. We take all day to do one episode, unlike a regular animated show, which might take two or three hours. The whole thing takes maybe eight hours. Jim, Matt and Sam [Simon, executive producer and frequent director] are all there for the 10 a.m. run-through, but Jim usually isn't there for the recording, it's usually Matt or Sam."

This round-table process is infinitely more time-consuming—and costly—than those used by more traditional animated shows, Castellaneta says. "I've done a few things for the Disney Channel. They'll do a show all the way through, and you might have to read a line once or twice, maybe three times. Then, the director will mark down what he wants to redo, and he'll do retakes after everyone has left—I don't have to go in to reloop anything after that. They do something like 65 shows, so they want to get done with them quickly. Disney takes a little more care in terms of the animation and stuff, whereas on our show, they labor over the writing because they're also targeting an adult audience."

Once the tracks are laid down for an episode, the actors are called back for a quick looping session, as needed. "After we get everything done and they get the show back from Korea, I come in for an hour or so for a [looping] session," remarks Castellaneta. "It usually happens when Jim, Matt and Sam look at the pencil tests [done at the Klasky-Csupo animation facility in Hollywood] and say, 'That line kind of went flat,' when they watch the visuals. They either correct the visual—when the line doesn't quit sync up correctly—or they write a new line and we reloop it."

Some improvisation is allowed, according to Castellaneta. "At the readings, we'll ad-lib a line here and there.

Why is *The Simpsons* so popular? Castellaneta isn't sure. "Maybe because it's a fusion of sitcom and cartoon," he suggests. "That's sort of what *The Flintstones* was, but I think the difference is visual—*The Simpsons* takes a page out of *Mad* Magazine. Everything in *The Flintstones* was done very simply. *The Simpsons* is packed with all sorts of visual jokes and things you might not pick up on right away. As [visual consultant] Brad Bird once said, 'Since our animation is limited, we have to try and make it look more like a film.' They really do take a lot of care with how they move the camera."

The show's offbeat slant has come

about, Castellaneta says, because "the characters were allowed to grow organically" from the 60-second spots. "I think Harry Shearer said it: Nobody was really paying attention to it [when it was a one-minute cartoon], so the characters had a long time to develop. Nobody was tampering with it; it was a cartoon, so no executives were coming down to the set and hanging around. As soon as it established itself, it was hard to change, especially when it became popular."

As to the oft-noted comparisons between Homer and Fred Flintstone, Castellaneta sees them both as "working-class dolts in the tradition of Ralph Kramden [on *The Honeymooners*]. And they're both lovable losers. One difference is that like Ralph Kramden, Fred Flintstone always had some sort of scheme going, whereas I think Homer just wants to keep things status quo. I also think the satire on our show is a little more cutting-edge than *The Flintstones*."

As a self-described comedic actor—"I've never done stand-up *per se*; it has always been improvisation or acting"—Castellaneta specializes in funnyman roles that tap into life's lighter side. In fact, all of his films thus far have been comedies: *K-9*, *The War of the Roses* ("I was the guy that listened to Danny DeVito's story—you saw me, but you didn't hear my voice."), *Nothing in Common* (he played one of Tom Hanks' creative peers at the ad agency) and *Say Anything* ("I'm only in the home video—I was in edited footage that they later put into the video.").

Ask him to name his favorite *Simpsons* episode and he starts chuckling even before he has formulated a response. "I really liked the one where Homer got promoted because he grew a headful of hair by using this hair restorer we called demoxadil. He's about to rise in the company until Bart breaks his demoxadil bottle and it's found out that he used his company insurance to pay for it. He loses his hair and he has to get in front of the entire board to give a report, and of course they go, 'Who's that bald guy?' It was like a mini-movie, sort of a cartoon version of Rod Serling's *Patterns*. It was really well done."

**"[Homer's] so primal that he makes me laugh," says Castellaneta.**

Does he like the fact that Homer is getting more attention this season? "Oh, yeah, sure," he says. "I really do like the character. In one show, Homer is going to the mall to buy Lisa some teen magazines. There's this huge cookie in front of a store called Atlas Cookies—there's an Atlas holding a cookie the size of the globe. He stops and goes, 'Wow...Big cookie.' I mean, he's so primal that he makes me laugh. Food and TV are his main staples."

Castellaneta has only resounding praise for his *Simpsons* co-workers. "First of all, I respect and really like working with everybody on the show. It's such a tremendous group of talent. Harry Shearer is an incredible comic genius, I think, and an unrecognized one—he doesn't have as high a profile as someone like Robin Williams, but I think he's brilliant. I remember seeing Julie on *Rhoda*, and I had always wanted to work with her—I've always admired her. Nancy is a joy to work with; she's really possessed by Bart. There really is a little kid inside her. Yeardley is as sweet as Lisa is; she really brings the character's sweetness to life, because that's the way she is."

As for the series' creative team, the actor says, "I've always been an admirer of Matt's *Life in Hell* [strip]—I like his sense of humor, his take on life. Sam, I know from *The Tracey Ullman Show*. He's a real top-notch writer and director; he really gets a great reading out of us. And, of course, Jim Brooks...what hasn't been said about him? Everything that has been said is true: He can take anything and turn it into gold. He can take a script that falls completely flat, call all the writers in, and come back with something that's really great."

Staying with *The Simpsons* for an indefinite run would be "absolutely no problem" for Castellaneta. "At most, the show only takes a day out of my week. The ones who work hardest, I think, are the writers, animators and post-production people—they're the ones who work 'round the clock. All the actors are able to do the show plus other things."

Does he worry about *The Simpsons* becoming a victim of overexposure? "I was afraid the merchandising might turn people against the show," he admits. "With the T-shirts, some people got a negative connotation. I've talked to people who have said that *The Simpsons* is anti-family, and I went, 'Whataya mean? What episode told you that?' And they would say, 'Well, I didn't actually watch it.' You've gotta watch the show, you know? It's a *very* intelligent show. Some of the educators that are complaining about *The Simpsons*...the guys that write the show probably have a better education than *they* do!"

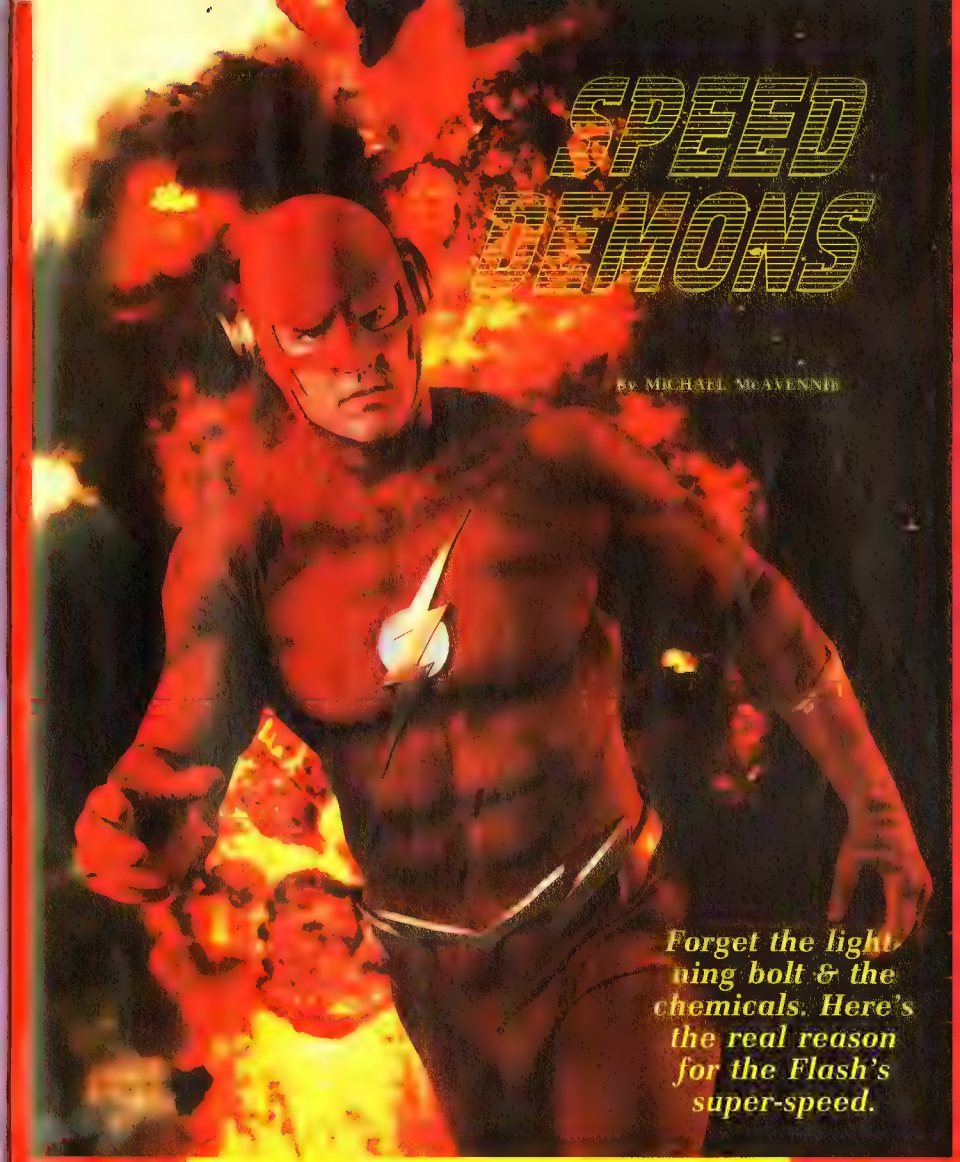
For the last two questions in the interview, Dan Castellaneta agrees to reply as his cartoon alter-ego.

"Homer, did you know millions of women think of you as a sex symbol?"

"Get outta here! They do *not*! There's only one person that does, and that's Marge. Although I have to say that there are a few women that make a few kissy faces. But I wouldn't say millions; it's more like 30."

"Does it bother you that Bart seems to be getting more media attention than you?"

"Well, he's always been somebody who clamors for the spotlight. Which is fine. That way, I stay outta trouble."



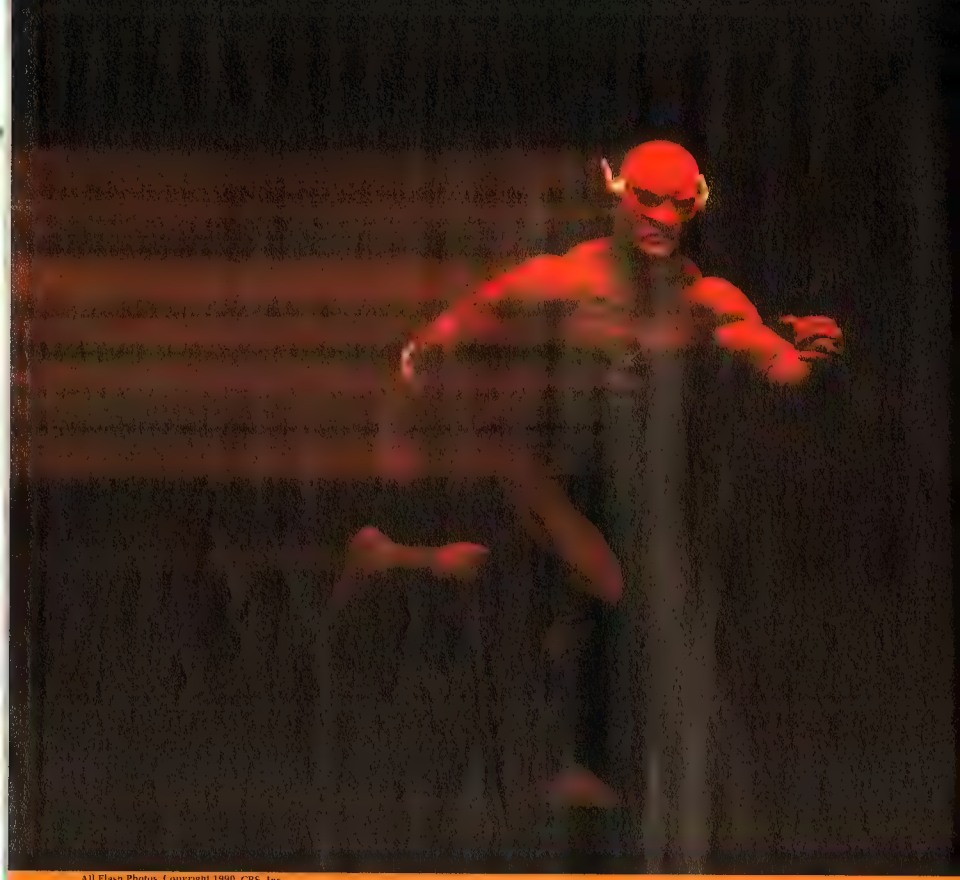
# SPEED DEMONS

by MICHAEL McAVENNIE

***Forget the lightning bolt & the chemicals. Here's the real reason for the Flash's super-speed.***

*The Flash* is in the final stretches of its first full season, and while the jury is still undecided on its chances for renewal, the CBS series has made a stronger run than critics originally predicted.

A major reason for the show's survival has been its impressive visual effects. Not so long ago, these FX would have been considered too expensive or impossible to do economically for a weekly series, but



All Flash Photos Copyright 1990 CBS, Inc.

the digital edit bays at The Post Group, Los Angeles, prevent *The Flash* from standing still in the ratings race.

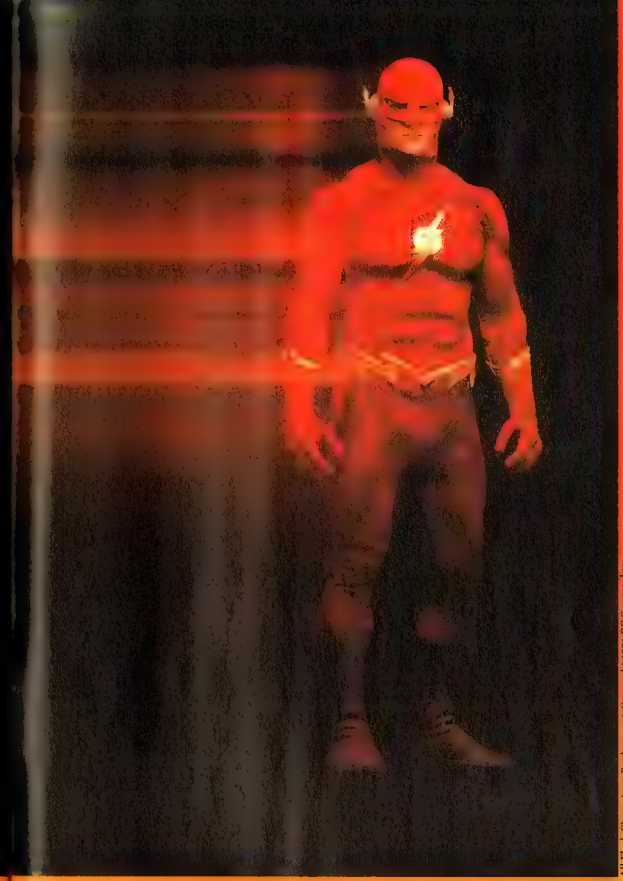
Post Group editors Peter Moyer and Pat Clancey, who also provide post-production services for *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, are responsible for keeping the scarlet speedster and his audience motivated. Moyer and Clancey share the duty of compositing shots for the show, creating motion blurs as the Flash runs at super-speed, and painting in after-trails as he passes. Although Warner Bros., which produces the series, insists that each episode be shot on film and maintain a film aesthetic, Moyer explains that everything is done digitally.

"After shooting, the film is Steadi-Gated [transferred] onto D-1 [digital] videotape," he says. "Then, everything is composited in either one of our two edit bays. We stay digital from the moment it leaves the film to the very end."

Moyer then enhances and transfers the finished product back to film via The Post Group's proprietary Gemini Process. "Each frame is broken down into three color records [red, blue and green] and shot back onto film as three separations. Then, it's taken to an optical house and recomposited. Prints are made from the negative."

The most basic and important effect on the show, says Clancey, is speeding up the Flash and providing him with his streak effect. "First, we take a scene in which the Flash is shot running at normal or somewhat high speed," he explains. "After transferring onto D-1, we take the tape into our edit bay, put it into an Abekas A64 [digital disk recorder] and speed up the entire scene. Sometimes, however, there are other elements in the scene that we can't speed up, such as steam or actors moving at normal speed. So, we go back in and split up normal portions of the scene by drawing custom mattes on our Digital F/X Composium, to lay those elements back in at normal speed.

"Once we've got all that worked out, we add a little feedback through the switcher in order to blur the Flash a bit, give him a bit of transparency and avoid making him look like the Keystone Kops," Clancey continues. "Then, we add a streak to him, providing the illusion that there's an after-image of him through the course of his run. What we do is take his image in the Composium and create a



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**Motivating the Flash. The Post Group way: 1) Speed up running scenes on a digital disk recorder; 2) Add feedback through a digital switcher for a "transparent" look; 3) Create a streak effect on a DF/X Composium, then smudge the image for a smoother look; 4) Track several wipes on the digital switcher to create the illusion of an after-image trailing up behind him.**

streak in the path of his run. We then smudge it together to give the streak a smoother look while featuring the suit's red and gold elements. Then, we track a couple of wipes through on our Abekas A84 [digital switcher] to give the illusion that the streak is trailing up behind him."

On numerous occasions, the Flash has used his super-speed to simultaneously duke it out with several thugs (as he did in "Watching the Detectives" and the pilot). Although series star John Wesley Shipp or a stand-in throws the punches, Moyer, Clancey and visual FX supervisor Bob Bailey make sure the blows land where they're supposed to.

"First, we use the A64 to record a background plate of the scene, with the bad guys reacting to invisible punches," explains Moyer. "We then use an A60 [another Abekas digital disk recorder] to record a foreground plate of the Flash element [either Shipp or a stand-in in costume over a black screen] punching thin air." The editor points out that they chose a black screen composite over the more commonly-used blue screen "because our initial tests with blue screen didn't provide favorable results. The Flash's streak would look very thin, and you could see some of the blue through it."

When the criminals have been shot reacting to choreographed "punches," Bob Bailey takes the scene and goes through a frame count to figure out when each punch is actually thrown. "The Flash is then shot on the black screen stage at about two or three frames a second," says Clancey, "and Bob choreographs Shipp's fight in such a way that the Flash is standing in the exact same position as relative to the background scene. Many measurements are taken of the background scene, so they can map out the scene on the black screen stage with the proper perspective."

Using the black screen composite, the editors take a luminance key of the Flash, make a black matte from the key and use it to cut a black hole, adding the character into the scene with the other actors. "Once we've added the black hole into the scene," Moyer explains, "we do a matte-type key, in which we take both pieces of video and mix them completely together. This technique adds every phase of the two pictures together."

The Flash's ability to pass through solid objects has also made the transition from comics to TV. In the episode "Blue Paradise," the speedster vibrates his molecules and passes through a brick wall for the first time. "We shot the background and Flash separately as usual," Clancey says, "although to get this particular 'going-through-the-wall' effect, we shot him over a blue screen. After putting the Flash in our Ampex ADO 2000 to make him 'vibrate,' I chroma-keyed him through the A84. Then, I put him over the scene and sent that element to our Quantel Harry artist, Scott Milne. Scott created a Flash-shaped seam in the wall, and he put sort of a glowing white edge on it as Shipp went through."

Moyer and Clancey are given three to five days to provide between 30 to 80 effects for each episode. "It's usually budgeted at about an hour for each effect," Moyer states. "Some take less time, but there are other shots that take about three or four hours to work on. I'm able to do straight speed-up and speed effects in about 20 minutes, but that's only if there's no one else involved in the scene. If there are other actors involved or live action on one side of the screen, then I have to do numerous things like split-screens, which become more complicated and time-consuming.

"The most difficult shots I've done yet," he adds, "are the ones where he runs around corners. Those are the hardest shots to work on because they require two or three levels of streaks.

**The Flash's (all three of them) super-speed is easier to create in comics than for the TV series. For example, running around corners is no problem.**

A streak *cannot* fold over on itself, because if it does, it covers up what was there and you can't see it."

Clancey describes scenes where the Flash has to interact with other actors as "very tricky sometimes. One of the more difficult effects I've done is a scene where he interrupts a bank robbery. There's one actor, screen right, who's backing up toward the left side. The Flash then enters through a door on the left-hand side in the background, runs straight toward the camera, and intercepts the actor. That took some doing because at the point of contact, the Flash was about three-quarters behind the actor. So, I split him out of the scene, put him back in running at high speed, and had him meet the actor at the precise moment. Since there were many shadows involved of him falling on set pieces, I had to split them out as well. This made them less noticeable in between speeded-up and normal speed portions."

Other problems occur for the editors when the Flash performs a super-speed feat as Barry Allen. "It's the same sort of speed-up effect," Clancey remarks, "but the streaks are harder to do, because the character isn't wearing his red Flash costume. Barry usually wears earth-tone outfits, so a streak isn't that apparent. The good thing about the red is that it's such a radical color difference that the streaks become very apparent."

Moyer believes that scenes shot at night are easier to work on than those shot in daylight. "When it's a daylight shot, the scene behind the Flash is very bright, and if we do a black screen shot, some of the scene behind him may key through. In that case, we perform frame-by-frame rotoscoping, either to put the other scene back in and put him back in there, or to cut a custom matte. For daylight scenes now, we normally just shoot the Flash over the scene and not bother with the black screen. It just doesn't look as good in a day scene."

Both editors agree that the Abekas A84 digital switcher is the most important piece of equipment used on *The Flash*. "Without the A84, none of this is possible," Moyer comments. "I can do up to eight layers of keying at once on that switcher. Without that capability, we couldn't see what the shot would look like until it was fully composited, which by that time may be too late to make any changes." Pat Clancey says having a DF/X Composium in their bay is also very important. "To be able to draw mattes right then and there and not have to send out for them is really a big help.

"There are some things that we're doing on video that just couldn't be done on film," he adds. "Much of the feedback technique we're using to smooth out his movements is something that couldn't be done easily with film. The most important thing, however, is the time factor. There's *no way* these FX could be done for a weekly series as film opticals. There's just too much time involved in doing everything that way. With video, everyone involved with the show can sit in a room, watch what we're doing, and see how it's going to turn out instantly. With film, you have to wait a day for lab work to see if an effect worked. We can go through 15 or 20 different versions in less than an hour with video. It's cost-effective in the fact that it can be done so fast, and once it's done, it's definitely *done*."

"What's very nice about working on *The Flash* is that we're involved in the creative process," Peter Moyer concludes. "We're down on the set and watching all of the shooting just to make sure that everything's going to come out OK. The people we work with [at Warner Bros.] are basically film-oriented people, while we're video-oriented. We don't know all that they're capable of, just as they don't know all that we're capable of, so everything we're doing on *The Flash* is still a learning process."

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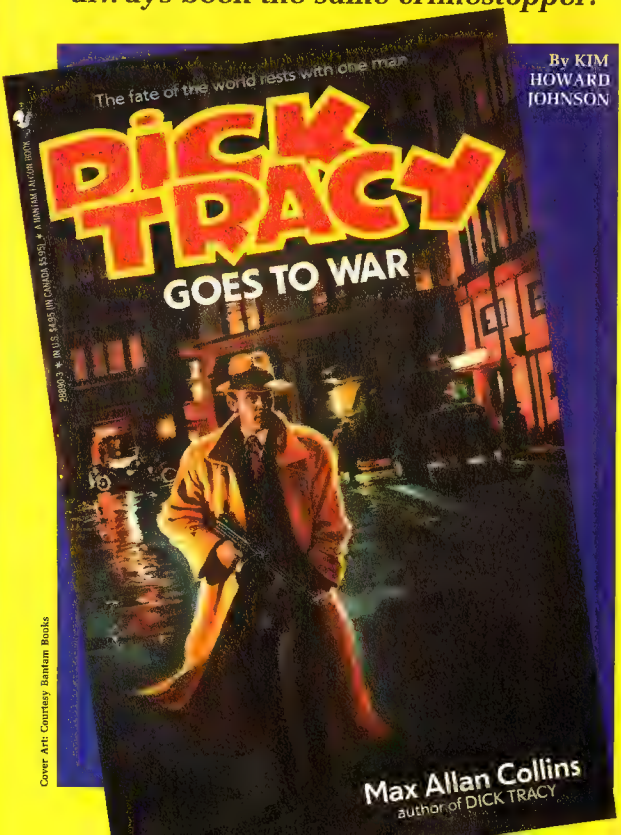
Art: Chester Gould

***Throughout the decades, he hasn't always been the same crimestopper.***


The fate of the world rests with one man
By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON
DICK TRACY
GOES TO WAR
Max Allan Collins
author of DICK TRACY

Cover Art: Courtesy Bantam Books

During his first 60 years, America's greatest detective went through a number of distinct periods, according to current *Dick Tracy* strip writer Max Allan Collins, whose new *Tracy* novel *Dick Tracy Goes to War* is now out from Bantam Books ($4.95).

"In the first 10 years, Chester Gould was really exploring the format, this Americanized Sherlock Holmes; doing realistic police work, and bringing ballistics and line-ups into the strip when nobody was even doing it in novels or movies to the degree that he was. Chet kept his villains tied to the front pages. The first era was characterized by the outlaws and the gangsters. There was a strong dose of soap opera, in the best sense of the words, with a lot of drama with Tess and Junior," says Collins.

The '40s saw the rise of grotesque villains whose names and appearances reflected their evil. Although the soap opera was still there, a more lighthearted element started creeping in with characters like Gravel Gertie, B.O. Plenty and Vitamin Flintheart. "There was a rich cast of humorous grotesques, as well as the villainous grotesques, which reflects Chet's love of the humor strips. He was a humor cartoonist who accidentally went down this road, because this was the thing that they bought," says Collins, noting that the '40s saw grander art, with the bold blacks that became a *Tracy* trademark.

In the '50s, when newspapers began printing their strips smaller, Gould started drawing the dailies smaller too, resulting in cramped artwork. "He began to put the emphasis on the stories—which is not to say that the artwork suffered, but I think he felt he had to compensate. The stories got ex-

**In Collins' new novel, *Dick Tracy Goes to War* in the '40s with the likes of B-B Eyes, The Mole and Shaky.**

Art: Chester Gould

Gould Dick Tracy Art: Copyright 1978 Chicago Tribune-NY News Syndicate

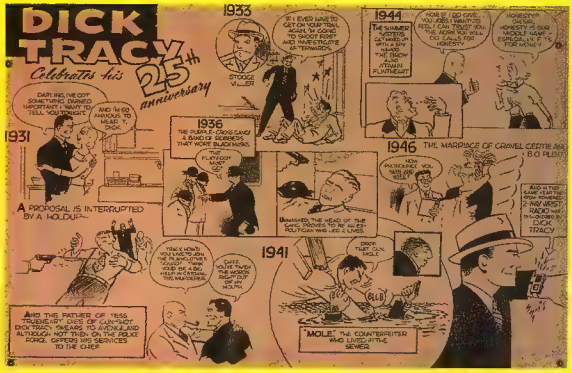
tremely strong, and the human and soap opera element kicked back in. Chet was at his storytelling peak here," Collins says, citing the Flattop Jr. story.

"Then, in the late '50s and early '60s, some really off-the-wall stories started happening, like the chimp story. I think he felt it was time to change gears again. He always wanted to be one step ahead, and that's when he moved into this science fiction area," says Collins of the controversial period that introduced the Space Coupe, Moon Maid and Moon City in the '60s.

"There are people who think it was an unfortunate decision on his part. To me, even though maybe it is his imagination at its least disciplined, only Chet could have thought that stuff up! It's very well-executed for what it is." Collins speculates that Gould, who was being ridiculed by the left-wing press for being fascist, withdrew into the strip's graphic side because he didn't want to engage in discussions with his critics. "While maybe the storytelling powers were starting to slip—by that I just mean the stories themselves and *not* his ability to tell the stories—toward the end of the '60s, I feel he really kicked in, in terms of his art; his interest began to be in the artwork."

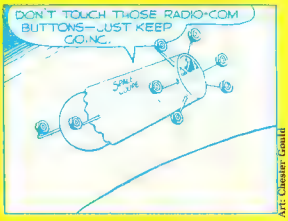
By the '70s, the size of the Sunday page was reduced, and the syndicate told Gould not to do science fiction. "Quite frankly, I think he was getting a little tired. At the same time, it stayed graphically strong. There was a real strong burst of final villains, like the Button and Pucker Puss, and topical subject matter—obscene phone calls, record counterfeiting, a feminist bank robbery gang and Watergate-style politicians. Even up to the very end, he was staying one step ahead."

In assessing his own work on the strip, Collins says, "Rick Fletcher and I attempted to bring the strip back to Earth and make it more straightforward, yet continue on that course of timely subject matter, re-introduce certain characters that Chet had abandoned, jettison characters that had outlived their usefulness, and get things up and running."




Art: Chester Gould

**Chester Gould's first 25 years on *Tracy* matched the crimestopper with outlaws, gangsters and grotesque characters.**




Art: Chester Gould

***Tracy* offered some out-of-this-world stories in the '60s with the Space Coupe, Moon Maid and Moon City.**

Max Allan Collins explains that while the late Rick Fletcher specialized in drawing gadgets; "There's a great deal more humor in the Dick Locher era today. I write to a person's strong point, and he's so good with humor, that tends to be where I go."

All Dick Tracy Art & Characters: Copyright 1991 Tribune Media Services, Inc.

**Collins notes that "[Gould] was at his storytelling peak" with *Tracy* in the '50s.**

**Gould, Fletcher and Collins' attempts to bring *Tracy* "back to Earth" in the '70s included Moon Maid's death.**

Art: Rick Fletcher

## *For 40 years, Hank Ketcham raised a cartoon demon named Dennis.*

By JAMI BERNARD

He's going on 40 years now, and yet Dennis the Menace isn't getting any older. Or younger. He's still five-and-a-half, and that's the way it's always going to be.

Hank Ketcham, however, can't keep time from catching up with him. Dennis' creator is looking forward to the Menace's Golden Anniversary 10 years from now, at which time Ketcham himself will be 80—but the cartoonist has maintained his boyish, lantern-jawed good looks, and the subject of the cartoon panel that made him famous still gets him going.

"The characters in the panel are part of my family," he says. "They're always up to something new and challenging, and I'm very much interested in what they're doing. I don't know what I would do, really, if I weren't very much involved in their lives. Probably spend more time painting or writing, but I'm an old racehorse still walking around in the harness with the jinglebells, still good legs and able to run around the track. So, yes, I look forward to a 50th."

Meanwhile, to celebrate the Menace's 40th, Ketcham recently wrote an autobiography, *The Merchant of Dennis*, and a compilation of his favorite panels through the years. Both books are from Abbeville Press.

Dennis the Menace is the little boy with the big smile and the slingshot in his back pocket, wreaking havoc on the nerves of his neighbor Mr. Wilson, or on his parents, or on his shaggy pet dog. He talks back, says the darndest things and manages to stir up trouble wherever he goes, whether it's dropping a frog into a birthday punch or making outrageous bedtime prayers.

When Ketcham talks about Dennis, he's speaking solely about the cartoon. But the inspiration for Dennis the Menace was Ketcham's first child, the real Dennis, a deceptively angelic-looking boy with a round face and tousled blond hair. Ketcham chose the name "Mitchell" at random, but the other names for the panel's characters were chosen with someone in mind: Wilson was Ketcham's Sunday School superintendent, Margaret his schoolboy crush, Wade the local grocer. Gina Gillotti was named partly after the voluptuous Italian actress and partly as an homage to the No. 170 Gillotte penpoint Ketcham draws with.

Dennis Ketcham got to name the dog with the first word that came to mind—Ruff—but otherwise had little to do with the cartoon that bears his name.

Inspiring the comic strip that made his father famous was something the real-life Dennis would live to regret.

"IS THIS TOOTHPASTE OR SHAVING CREAM?"

All Dennis Art: Hank Ketcham

"Dennis has changed physically over the years," his creator notes, certainly from this, his first appearance.

"GO AHEAD, DADDY — SQUIRT IT RIGHT IN HIS EYE!"

From the beginning, *Dennis the Menace* has been a particularly sunny strip, but it didn't accurately reflect the Ketcham household. *The Merchant of Dennis* alludes to troubles, but you must read between the lines to understand just how deep they were. The fact that the real Dennis is hardly mentioned, except for noting that at eight years old, he had "severe learning disabilities that were not being properly addressed by the family." Ketcham's wife was apparently an alcoholic and a drug abuser, who "succumbed shortly after her 40th birthday."

It's hard to tell whether the real Dennis was more a brat than any ordinary child, or whether Hank and his late wife, Alice, were just ill-prepared as young marrieds to deal with a baby. "All four- or five-year-olds are the same, no matter where they come from, all over the world," claims Ketcham now. "They're little computers that must be programmed. They're little animals that haven't been here before, and so they're looking under a rock to find out what's under there. They put their arm into the puddle to see how deep and dirty it is. They're just learning. So, of course, it's terrible for the adult, who doesn't have the patience to put up with that."

In hindsight, he recommends that parents have more than one child. "One is much more difficult, and it's not really too good a deal for the child, because he spends a lot of time by himself and gets into all kinds of strange situations and gets bored."

Ketcham's ambivalence for his son began much earlier, and continues to this day. In *The Merchant of Dennis*, he recalls a car trip with "a rambunctious two-and-a-half-year-old in the back seat [who] saved us from becoming bored. Seething with rage and frustration perhaps, but never bored."

He describes Dennis at age four as "too young for school, too big for his playpen, too small to hit, not old enough for jail—and 100 percent anti-establishment."

An incident that year got Ketcham's creative juices flowing. "The little darling was supposed to be taking a nap," Ketcham recalls. "Instead, he had spent the better part of one hour quietly dismantling his room. When the accidental load he carried in his underpants was added to his collection of plastic toys, cookie crumbs, and a leftover peanut butter sandwich, it formed an unusual mix."

Alice yelled at her husband, "Your son is a *menace*!"

And on March 14, 1951, Dennis Ketcham forever became a pale imitation of his adopted brother, Dennis the Menace, a cartoon he grew to despise.

"He didn't understand the cartoons," says Ketcham now. "Well-meaning adults would pat him on the head and say, 'Well, Dennis, what are you going to do to Mr. Wilson today?' Dennis had an identity crisis there for a number of years. He grew out of it, but it wasn't easy. When his mother died, it put another crimp into it."

All Dennis Art & Photos: Merchant of Dennis/Abbeville Press

**One of Dennis' earliest escapades.**

THIS IS MY MOTHER, TOMMY. ISN'T SHE PRETTY?

Dennis was 10 when his mother died, an eerie parallel to his father's childhood. Hank's mother died when he was 12, but these shared experiences didn't bring father and son any closer. "Dennis was on his own from the time he was 10 years old, with boarding school and the Marine Corps, and living with friends in various parts of the midwest. And my life changed, too. I was in Europe for 18 years, so our paths just divided that way."

When Ketcham remarried, his son was best man, but "we've just gone our separate ways, so communication is down to a very minimal." Did Dennis become a cartoonist? "I wish he was a cartoonist," Ketcham says. "He has his own life, and he's living quite apart from mine. He's in Ohio. He has been married and divorced, and going from one job to another."

Ketcham speaks about his first child with the measured, resigned voice that comes from an old, deep wound. He mentions the case of the cartoonist Winsor McCay, whose son "grew up to be an old man still living in the shadow of his father's work, with an identification crisis. So, good, bad or indifferent, this is the way the cookie crumbled, and it's *not* the way I had envisioned, or hoped, but it is the way it *happened*."

He chalks it up to a lifetime of "misunderstanding, miscommunication, being on a different level intellectually. I don't dwell on it at all. I have my own life to lead, and I'm very happy. I hope that he is too. When he has any kind of problems, needs any help, he's Johnny-on-the-spot, he's in touch with me. So, he knows that I'm there to support him when he runs into any problems."

With his second wife, Ketcham has two children, Dania, 18, and Scott, 14. "They keep me pretty well-versed as to what's going on in the youth of America," says Ketcham, who clearly has a more relaxed life with his second family.

Maybe that's reflected in the particular changes his cartoon panel has undergone over the years.

"Like most cartoons, Dennis has physically changed over the years. If you look back at the '50s and compare it to what's done now, there's quite a bit of difference that even the most casual reader could discern, but you can say that about *Donald Duck*, *Blondie* or *Peanuts*, too. So, if I wanted to reuse some of the old material, some pretty funny stuff, I would have to redraw it, because people wouldn't recognize it as being Dennis or his family."

For instance, Dennis was originally designed as a sort of dwarf, perhaps a hangover from Ketcham's days working for the animation studio that made the Seven Dwarfs famous. "He was around two-and-a-half heads high, completely out of any pleasant proportion," says Ketcham. "I just changed him around and modified his hairdo. His mother has become more attractive, his dad not quite such a nerd. They don't yell at each other as much. They take Dennis a little bit more graciously, and with more of a sense of humor. What I've done, I guess, is surround myself with people that I enjoy in a neighborhood in which I feel comfortable, and if someone doesn't fit in, I just erase him. So, I control my environment with a pencil and an eraser."

Those are chilling words taken in context with Ketcham's relationship to the real Dennis, but then, Ketcham has his own childhood demons to contend with.

Hank and his younger sister, Joan,

"LOOK, KID, I DON'T MIND YA DIPPIN' IN MY POPCORN, BUT WIPE YOUR HAND ON YOUR *OWN* PANTS, SEE?"

**Dennis goes to the movies during the 1960s, and gets a reaction he would probably still get today.**

"BEANS AN' HOT DOGS AGAIN! GEE, MOM COULD SURE LEARN A LOT ABOUT COOKIN' FROM *YOU!*"

All Dennis Art: Copyright 1990 Hank Ketcham Enterprises

**Hank Ketcham meets the TV counterparts of Mr. Wilson, Henry Mitchell and Dennis (Joseph Kearns, Herbert Anderson and Jay North). The artist loved the series at first but grew to hate it.**

in conservative straight-arrow in me that pops to the surface like Old Faithful, especially where children are concerned. There's a behavior I expect, certain codes of dress and etiquette I demand, and areas of language and respect I insist upon. Somewhat chagrined, I have to admit that I *am* beginning to sound like an echo of my father."

Raised in Seattle, Hank Ketcham first became interested in cartoons when a friend of his father showed him how to use tracing paper. To Ketcham, it was like magic, and his first cartoons were ones he had traced so often that he had them memorized. But the illustrator was more interested in moving pictures—more specifically, in animation—and he left college early to go to California and knock on Disney's door.

Disney didn't answer Ketcham's knock, however, at least, not right away. He eventually found some work with the Walter Lantz Studio as an inbetweener, doing the drawings that link the cartoon characters' extremes of movement. Eventually, Ketcham got a foot in that Disney door as a temp worker on *Pinocchio*, for $25 a week.

Ketcham initially joined the famous Disney animators' strike in 1941, but since he was single and had no commitments, his enthusiasm for the strike waned. He crossed his picket line and became a scab worker, which resulted in bitter feelings among his colleagues.

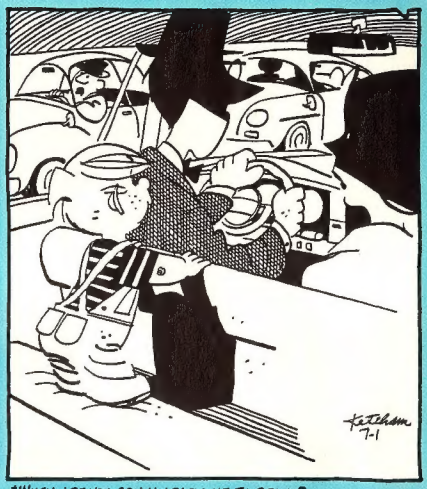
He dodged the draft, but not the war, by artificially raising his blood pressure on a diet of cucumbers so as to get out of the Army, hoping instead to enlist in the Navy—which he did,

**Whether they like it or not, Ketcham isn't about to let the Wilsons ever move out of the house next door to Dennis'.**

were "two normal, well-behaved, insecure, terrified kids." As well-behaved as they were, their father was a strict disciplinarian, a Navy man who swatted them around the ankles with a horsewhip. Ketcham recalls it now as no big deal, but admits in his autobiography that his sister "insists I screamed bloody murder."

Ketcham's childhood also coincided with the Depression and Prohibition, two negative forces that added to the authoritarian style he would later inadvertently adopt with his own children. "I'm a looser goose now," he says, "but, nonetheless, I have a built-

**Since their introduction, says Ketcham, Dennis' "mother has become more attractive, his dad not quite such a nerd."**




**Going trick-or-treating, Dennis teams up with a certain Dark Knight. Or does he?**

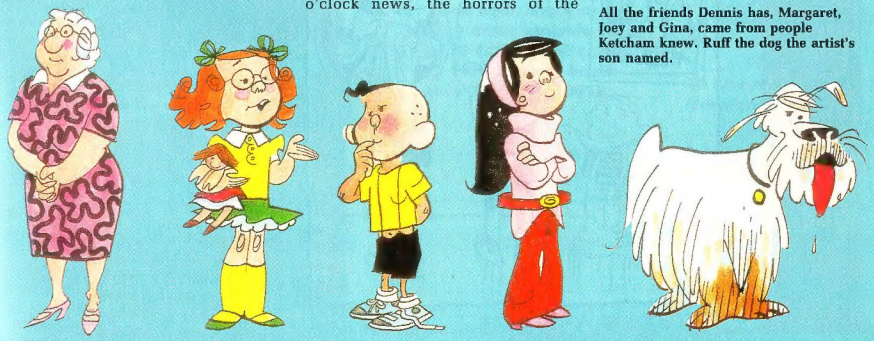
despite eyesight so poor all he could make out was the "E" on the eye chart. As a photographer's mate third class, he was assigned to the Photo Research Lab in Maryland. It's not as if he didn't see any action, though; during this time, he met Alice Louise Mahar, fell in love, and got married.

It was also during this time that Ketcham began freelancing cartoons to magazines. By 1944, he was appearing regularly in *Collier's* and *The Saturday Evening Post*. After the war, he and his wife moved to New York, where Ketcham pursued a freelance cartooning career, and where in 1946, Dennis Lloyd Ketcham was born.

Once *The New York Post* and its syndication service accepted the *Dennis the Menace* proposal, Ketcham's work life became simplified, although far from simple. Now all his efforts were devoted to one strip. The family soon moved to California, and Ketcham sent batches of *Dennis* panels back to New York through the mail for editing. Simple in concept and design, *Dennis the Menace* has withstood four decades of political and social change, and Ketcham thinks the strip could last forever, or at least as long as there are mischievous little boys in the world.

Some things remain constant with *Dennis the Menace*, in addition to the main characters and the fact that Dennis is forever young. "I don't deal with current events, politics or the 10 o'clock news, the horrors of the world," says Ketcham. "I've created this little lifestyle here so I can work ahead as far as I wish, because I'm not held in by current events. Really, only the toys have changed. Dennis used to run around on a tricycle when I first started. And then, when my son Scott was about four, I saw him tooling around the house on a two-wheeler with a friend on the back seat. Two wheels! He's only four! Holy smokes! It was then that I realized they weren't making small two-wheelers back in 1951. So, I threw away the tricycle, and now Dennis rides a little bike, and it's too bad, because the bike is a very sophisticated thing to draw, and it makes it more of a hardship."

Another modern change has been television's impact on the look and ac-



**All the friends Dennis has, Margaret, Joey and Gina, came from people Ketcham knew. Ruff the dog the artist's son named.**

**Dennis and the Wilsons hear the call of the '70s.**

"OH, *THERE* YA ARE, MR. WILSON! THE WAY YOUR PHONE JUST KEPT RINGIN', I THOUGHT FOR A MINUTE YOU MIGHT BE ASLEEP."

"I FORGOT. WAS PICASSO IN THE SECOND OR THIRD GRADE?"

tivities of a typical household. "Knowledge that we've had men on the Moon has changed the outlook of many of us."

Ketcham regrets that reruns of the old TV series are still airing on cable TV. In fact, he cringes at the thought of it, calling it "that live-action thing." He fears that people will see those dated reruns and think of Dennis as a child of the '60s. "When it started, the pilot was a knockout, with a very short Jay North. Then, as the years ticked by, Jay got older, still wearing those silly overalls. It got to be too much."

*Dennis the Menace* is currently syndicated in 1,000 newspapers in 14 languages and in 48 countries, according to Ketcham. He has a stable of about a half-dozen gag writers, and he sees his role as similar to Frank Sinatra or Frankie Avalon—"They don't write all their own songs, they *interpret* songs written by others. I interpret ideas that I accept from writers. It's something like show business, only you don't hear the applause for about three months."

He emphasizes that a great deal of care goes into each drawing, including where the action is set, how the characters are standing, what props are used and how realistic they look. Ketcham works on a tissue pad for his preliminary drawings, then uses a clean piece of drawing board lit from underneath, using the kind of India ink and pen "you would find in an old-fashioned post office, the Gillotte 170, a No. 3 brush to put in some of the heavier dark areas and a little lettering pen to write the caption, and we're off and running."

Batches of two weeks' worth of drawings—12 in all—come off his Strathmore two-ply plate finish drawing board per work session. "My assistants are learning to draw Dennis very nicely, so I may do less and less of him, play a little more golf and do some painting. As they improve, I can back off and smell the flowers a little bit. But I never get bored with Dennis."

As far as celebrating the actual 40th anniversary of the first strip, Hank Ketcham was planning nothing more elaborate than "a cupcake and a candle, then probably go to bed early. You know, anniversaries and birthdays, they don't have any particular attraction for me. It's just another milestone that we'll notice somehow or other, but we're not going to light any firecrackers or disturb anybody's peace in the process."

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